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CHRISTIANITY

IN

CHINA, TARTARY AND THIBET

BY

M. L'ABBÉ HUC,

FORMERLY MISSIONARY APOSTOLIC IN CHINA;

AUTHOR OF "THE CHINESE EMPIRE," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL I.

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PREFACE.

THE missionary labours of the Catholic Church have ever been amongst the brightest memorials of the wonders which she has effected, and of the glories which she has achieved in olden times. The results of her work are to be seen everywhere, and may be witnessed in every part of the globe. The civil institutions under which we live, and the banner of freedom which waves over our homes, are but the emblems of what the missionaries of the Catholic Church have effected, and of the changes which they have produced in the world. The polity of the Roman Empire had fallen crushed beneath the all-destroying power of the Goths and the Vandals. The civilization of Greece and Rome, and the influence which it had produced, had been swept away by those vast hordes, which for centuries, issued from their northern fastnesses and despoiled the fair face of Southern Europe. Those nations brought with them the worship of their own false gods and their unhallowed rites, which they would have placed in the temples which had been dedicated to the service of the Most High; the cross would have been taken down from the commanding position in which it was enshrined both on the Capitol and on the Vatican, had not the influence of the Catholic Church been extended over the triumphant nations, and had it not brought within its fold those who would have profaned its altars and laid them low in the dust. Nor did the missionaries rest here. They soon extended their labours to those parts of Europe which had been the extreme boundaries of the Roman Empire, and brought within the influence of the doctrines of the church those nations which the Roman poet sung of, as being the terror and the scourge of

the Empire. The Roman general, as he returned from the conquest of those nations, was received by the Senate with all the honours of a triumph; but the shout of triumph and the song of victory were saddened by the shrieks of those captives, who, after gracing the victor's march along the *Via Triumphalis*, to the temple of Capitoline Jove, were there put to death as a thank-offering for the victory that had been gained. Far different was the manner in which the victory of the Christian warrior was celebrated. He might not see again his home, or those dear companions of his labours, whom he had left to go forth to a strange land, that he might plant the standard of the cross; for it may be, he would shed his blood in the work in which he was engaged, and die a martyr in the glorious cause in which he was labouring. But the success of his work was not less certain. Silently, though surely, making its way, its effects would soon be seen. Nations would become Christianized. Their barbarous practices would be laid aside. The institutions of Christianity would take their place; and nations which had not known God or the beauties of his church, would now begin to sing its praises, and to join in its mystic rites.

The fire was kindled in the bosom of St. Gregory, as he heard of the mighty doings of the missionaries of the Church, in his convent on the Cælian Mount. He desired to go forth and join in their glorious work. The Roman pontiff acceded to his wishes, and St. Gregory had left Rome to proceed to the place where he hoped to convert many souls. But the people missed their friend and their saint, and soon caused him to be recalled. Meeting the Roman pontiff, they asked him, where he had sent St. Gregory, and said, they would not rest until he was once more dwelling amongst them, and ready to respond to their calls, and devote himself to their spiritual wants. But the zeal of the saint still burns in his bosom. Being raised to the pontifical chair, his eyes are turned to those nations where his heart longed so anxiously to sow the seed of life, and to win souls to the Church. The circumstance which turned his attention to Britain is familiar to every reader of history,—*angeli*, he desired those should become who were but *Angli*. St. Augustine is sent forth from his home on the Cælian Hill, from that convent which has since sent so many saints to the English shores, with a commission to become

its bishop, and with the necessary authority to enable him to receive episcopal consecration, should it please God to bless his labours, and enable him to convert the English nation to Catholicity. We know how nation after nation of the heptarchy was brought within the fold, and how for centuries, Christianity flourished in the home of science and literature. Ireland, too, had become the Island of Saints, and the missionaries of both countries might be found extending to other lands the blessings and hallowed joys which the Church imparts wherever she takes up her abode, and establishes the benign influence of her fostering care. Nor did her labour cease until nation after nation became Christian, and all Europe acknowledged the See of Peter as the centre of unity, and as the source of all light and truth.

Soon, however, was the fair field of the Church despoiled by the wild boar of the woods which the enemy turned into it. Heresy and schism cut off from the Church some of the fairest portion of her domain, and deprived her of some of the brightest gems in her crown of glory. For this she was prepared. She knew it was to be with her as it was with her master, that persecutions and trials must needs come. For these she prepared herself, and girded herself for the contest. With boldness she proclaims the truths which she had ever preached, and with mildness she pronounces her sentence of condemnation on those who had left her fold. New scenes are opened to her missionary labours. New lands are calling to her to send them those who will break to them the bread of life, and enable them to drink of the fountain of mystic grace which lies sealed in her bosom.

The discovery of the Continent of America opened a new field of labour to the missionaries of the Catholic Church. Spain and Portugal did much in those countries of the New World which were brought under their dominion by those chivalrous soldiers that went forth at their bidding, and performed such prodigies of valour, to spread the knowledge of the Church, and give them the blessings of those institutions which had grown up beneath the shadow of the Church in the Old World. The wonders which the Jesuit missionaries effected in Paraguay, in collecting the wandering tribes of Indians and bringing them within the fold, are well known to all readers of the history of the Southern Continent of America, during the seventeenth century. As long as

their labours lasted they seem to have accomplished wonders, and to have done more in humanizing the wild man of the south, and of imparting to him the blessings of civilized life, than ever had been effected either before they planted the standard of the cross in those inhospitable paths, or since the time that human legislation crushed their efforts. True, nearly all this may have in some measure disappeared. It may be only in the villages dotted here and there along the banks of the many rivers that flow into the Amazon, that lasting impressions of their labours are now to be found. But it must not be concluded from this, that their labours failed, and that their work was naught, as now it is no longer to be seen by human eye. But the eye of faith knows where the results of this are to be found. It can pierce the heavens, and behold there the many souls which had been rescued from heathenism, and which were trained in the counsels and teachings of the Church whilst those missions flourished. It is at the last day we shall behold the full result of the missionaries' labours, and the wonders which the Church effected through every age in the salvation of souls. To look for these results in the mere civilization of nations, and in the teaching them the arts and the sciences, would be to seek for the mission of the Church in that which is not her proper domain, but only accessory to the great work which her master has left her on earth to accomplish. The labours of the missionaries in the other parts of the same continent had also effected much. The ecclesiastical establishments which they moulded into such regular and canonical form, had also had their advantages; while they did much in restraining the wild passions of men, they gave a tone to the society and the government of these countries, the benign influence of which is even now to be witnessed amidst the troubles which revolutions and the frequent changes of dynasties have caused of late years. That under their instruction souls have been trained in the way of Christian perfection, and that saints have been formed, a St. Rose of Lima, a blessed Turibius, archbishop of the same city, and a blessed Marianne of Quito, are sufficient proofs.

We look in vain for a canonized saint amongst the annals of our country, though it prides itself in having made far greater progress in civilization, and looks down with a feeling too much akin to contempt on the population of the different countries of South

America. It would seem that it is in countries which are Catholic that God is pleased to grant those wondrous graces which enable men to become saints, and to work those miracles which the Church requires before she enrols any in her calendar, and inscribes them amongst her saints. We look in vain for saints among the schismatical communions of Asia and the Russian dominion. Their calendar is in the same state that it was eight centuries ago. No new name has since been added to it. So also is it in those other parts of Europe which joined the so-called reformation of the sixteenth century. During the last three centuries the catalogue of the saints has been enlarged by the names of holy men being inscribed upon it from Spain, France and Italy, while we look in vain for the names of any from England, Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. This seems no less strange than true. It would seem that in those countries and kingdoms where God is honoured in a public manner, and where his Church is looked upon as the Church of the people and the country, that there saints grow up beneath its fostering influence, and the power of God is more especially manifested, as it was in the ages of faith.

The labours of a Xavier have thrown a halo around the missions of Asia, which time serves only to render still brighter. His toils, his travels, his work in the salvation of souls, are familiar to us, and have become as household words in every Catholic family. No danger seemed to daunt him, or to cause his soul to faint within him. It served rather to animate his ardour and to increase his labours in behalf of perishing souls. The voyage to India was to him a period of anxiety, for his soul sighed to begin its mighty work. Thousands were perishing for want of the knowledge of the teachings of the Church; which he was eager to impart to them. Thousands had already been baptized with that hand, which, enshrined in gold, even yet retains its natural appearance.* Japan had opened its inhospitable shores to him; but he desired to do more for the glory of God, and on the solitary rock of Sancian his soul burned to enter the kingdom of China, and to bestow the blessings of peace on the inhabitants of that mysterious country. Nor has the missionary zeal of the Church grown cold in

* It may be seen in the Eternal City, over the altar which is dedicated to the saint, in the Church of the *Gesu*.

these latter days. Soon after England had banished the Catholic religion and established a new form of faith, Gregory XIII., acting under the advice of Cardinal Allen, turned the English Hospitium which had existed in Rome for several centuries, into an English college, and placing it under the Jesuits, formed an institution from which missionaries have gone forth to bring back England to the faith. Though it has not pleased Providence to grant them such success, yet He bestowed such grace upon them as enabled them to lay down their lives for the Catholic Church, and to become martyrs for the faith. For nearly three centuries the English college has continued to send forth its missionary priests, and it is calculated that one priest in eight amongst those at present in England, have been supplied by that institution. Succeeding Pontiffs have been equally careful to establish colleges and institutions for other countries. The convent of St. Isidore, established by Luke Wadding, with the aid of Cardinal Ludovisio, has done a glorious work for Ireland, in sending to that country its holy men, who, during three centuries of persecution, have kept the faith alive in the Island of Saints, and have imparted the consolations of religion to its inhabitants, amidst trials and persecutions such as no other nation has ever suffered. The College of the Propaganda, established by Urban VIII., has also sent its missionaries to all parts of the world; many of them have died the martyr's death, and others of them have gained the confessor's crown. Of late years, the Propagation of the Faith established at Lyons in 1822, has done much in supplying the missions in all parts of the world with means to enable them to carry on their glorious work. To whatever part of the globe we look, we shall at the present time see glorious evidences of the missionary labours of the Catholic Church. In the north, in the south, in the east, and the west, amidst trials and dangers, the standard of the Cross is planted, and the Church is opening wide her arms to receive nations and people within her fostering embrace. At the present day she is fulfilling her divine mission of teaching all nations.

If from the contemplation of Catholic missions we turn to those which have been established by the different Protestant denominations, we shall indeed find that the pure gold has become dim, and that little has been effected by them in diffusing the belief in

their peculiar tenets amongst the heathens of either the old or the new world.

Though that event which has been looked upon as the dawn of a new era, and has been dignified with the title of the Reformation, took place in England and in other countries of Europe during the earlier half of the 16th century, it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that the idea struck those different bodies that they should spread their opinions among the heathen. A signal failure had already attended their endeavours to propagate their doctrines in Europe. It is a striking fact, recorded by a Protestant historian, Dr. Waddington, dean of Durham, in his history of the Church, that since the death of Luther, no other nations have been gained to the cause of the Reformation besides those which had given their adhesion to it previous to his death. A similar statement may be made with respect to the different heathen countries where they have sent their missionaries. Large sums of money have indeed been subscribed in different parts of England. The efforts of a zeal which merits a better cause. The manner in which it has been spent indicates too often a want of the same zeal, and would lead a person to believe that self has been the predominant spirit which actuated the missionary, and not a desire of "evangelizing the heathen." An American voyager gives us the following testimony respecting the state of things in the Sandwich Islands: "Neat villas, trim gardens, shaven lawns, spires, and cupolas arise, while the poor savage soon finds himself an interloper in the country of his fathers, and that too on the very site of the hut where he was born." The following extract shows more fully the cause of this, and gives us a little insight into the manner in which the missionary carries on his work:

"Not until I visited Honolula was I aware of the fact that the small remnant of the natives had been civilized into draught-horses, and evangelized into beasts of burden. But so it is. They have been literally broken into the traces, and are harnessed to the vehicles of their spiritual instructors like so many dumb brutes!

"Among a multitude of similar exhibitions that I saw, I shall never forget a robust, red-faced, and very lady-like personage, a missionary's spouse, who day after day, for months together, took her regular airings in a little go-cart, drawn by two of the islanders, one an old grey-headed man, and the other a roguish stripling, both being, with the exception of the fig-leaf, as

naked as when they were born. Over a level piece of ground this pair of draught bipeds would go with a shambling, unsightly trot, the youngster hanging back all the time like a knowing horse, while the old hack plodded on and did all the work.

"Rattling along through the streets of the town in this stylish equipage, the lady looks about her as magnificently as any queen driven in state to her coronation. A sudden elevation and a sandy road, however, soon disturb her serenity. The small wheels become imbedded in the loose soil, and the old stager stands tugging and sweating, while the young one frisks about and does nothing; not an inch does the chariot budge. Will the tender-hearted lady—who has left friends and home for the good of the souls of the poor heathen—will she think a little about their bodies, and get out, and ease the wretched old man until the ascent is mounted? Not she; she could not dream of it. To be sure, she used to think nothing of driving the cows to pasture on the old farm in New England; but times have changed since then. So she retains her seat, and bawls out, 'Hookee! hookee!' (pull, pull). The old gentleman, frightened at the sound, labours away harder than ever; and the younger one makes a great show of straining himself, but takes care to keep one eye upon his mistress, in order to know when to dodge out of harm's way. At last the good lady loses all patience, 'Hookee! hookee!' and rap goes the heavy handle of her huge fan over the naked skull of the old savage, while the young one shies to one side, and keeps beyond its range. 'Hookee! hookee!' again she cries. 'Hookee tata kannaka!' (pull strong, men). But all in vain, and she is obliged in the end to dismount, and, sad necessity! actually to walk to the top of the hill!

"At the town where this paragon of humility resides, is a spacious and elegant American chapel, where divine service is regularly performed. Twice every sabbath, towards the close of the exercises, may be seen a score or two of little wagons ranged along the railing in front of the edifice, with two squalid native footmen in the livery of nakedness standing by each, and waiting for the dismission of the congregation to draw their superiors home."*

Nor is this state of things peculiar to the Marquesas Islands alone. The same writer describes what he saw in Tahiti; "On a fine evening you see a bevy of silk bonnets and parasols passing along the Broom-road, perhaps a band of pale little white urchins, sickly exotics, and oftener still, sedate elderly gentlemen with canes, at whose appearance the natives here and there slink into their huts. These are the missionaries, their wives and children, taking a family airing." But this delightful state of things is soon disturbed. A few Catholic missionaries make their appearance, and the hal-

* Melville's "Residence in the Marquesas," pp. 217-219.

cyon days of the missionaries are about disappearing. Soon it is necessary to hurl their thunder at these. The Catholic missionaries are called the "wee-wees," and the natives are treated with the following evangelical discourse from Sunday to Sunday, in in which a gentle hint is given as to the need of looking after the main chance.

"Wicked priests here: and wicked idols in women's clothes, and brass chains. Good friends, no you speak or look at them—but I know you won't: they belong to a set of robbers—the wicked Wee-wees. . . . . Good friend, this small island, but very wicked, and very poor: these two go together. Why Beretanee (Britain) so great? Because that island good island, and send *mickonaree* to poor Kannaka (Polynesian). In Beretanee, every man rich: plenty things to buy, and plenty things to sell. Houses bigger than Pomare's and more grand. . . . . Good friends, little to eat left at my house. Schooner from Sydney no bring bag of flour; and Kannaka no bring fig and fruit enough. Mickonaree do great deal for Kannaka: Kannaka do little for Mickonaree. *So, good friends, weave plenty of cocoa-nut baskets, fill 'em, and bring 'em to-morrow.*"*

From such a state of things as this it cannot be expected that much can be done in evangelizing the heathen. That the Protestant missions have been a failure is now an acknowledged matter of fact by all protestant writers on the subject, except the missionaries themselves, and the writers of the missionary reports in the different Protestant countries. The cause of this failure has been well stated by a writer in the Westminster Review, for July, 1856, who writes as follows on this subject:

"A poor student of some sectarian college, or a humble schoolmaster, goes out with a young wife whose little learning was all got at Sunday-school and chapel. They have been pinched in their circumstances—he has been educated by some endowment, and she has meritoriously earned her bread. They go out prepared to be burnt or cut to pieces. They find that their troubles are not of the martyrdom order; and when the fervour of expectation of that sort has died out, a void is left into which the seven devils of worldliness rush and take possession before the victim is aware. Hence the silk bonnets and parasols in the Broom-road; hence the little carriages drawn by converts, and driven by a lady's fan; hence the taxing decrees in the form of sermons from the pulpit; hence the handsome abodes, and ele-

* Melville's "Omoo," p. 172

gant lawns, and landed estates, or capital invested in shipping for the children, while the native population is starving, dwindling, and perishing; hence the confidence with which government and laws, taken from Moses, or from Blackstone, or from the Long Parliament, or from the imagination of a modern Pharisee, are imposed on whole peoples; hence the gusto with which political power is enjoyed; and hence the conversion, now so common, of religious into secular office, as when missionaries, who went out amidst prayers and hymns, and the laying on of hands, and tokens from the church or chapel, are heard of as consuls, prime ministers of native sovereigns, viceroys, or proprietors of land to an extent which would make them the George Hudsons of the landed interest at home. No stronger contrast between the ancient and modern missions appears than in the state of New Zealand, when Marsden's scheme of civilizing before converting merged in that of preaching and praying missionaries. The earlier missionaries were charged by the pious with having grown worldly,—being traders, farmers, justices of the peace, &c.; and those who went out to preach, pray, and baptize, as means of social as well as spiritual redemption, were presently found to be, when not themselves political dictators, the adherents of the despotism of a Hobson and a Fitzroy, and bound by their own vast landed possessions to the interests of land-sharks whom they would otherwise have anathematized. The New Zealand Land Commissioners declared in their published Report of 1843, that nineteen church missionaries at that time claimed 192,371 acres, and that to thirteen of them had been actually awarded 20,688 acres.

Well may the writer add, "This is something very unlike the lot of the missionary of old. It is not easy to fancy Xavier laying field to field for his own behoof." Indeed it could not be fancied, for he has been trained in a different school from that of the Protestant missionary. It is at the foot of the cross that the Catholic missionary has made his studies. It is there that he learns faith and long-suffering. He is willing to be esteemed a reproach for the cause of Christianity, and his heart and his thoughts are fixed on his suffering Lord. He has the grace of the sacraments by which he is strengthened, and by which he is enabled, during years, when he may behold no fruits to his labours, still to persevere in his missionary work. The poor Protestant missionary has none of these, and hence his failure. He has left his home with those natural feelings of self-devotion which beat strong in the breasts of many. This lasts until he lands in his appointed sphere; then he begins to feel the real nature of the duties that devolve upon him. To meet these, alas, he has not the necessary

graces; he is a stranger to them, and therefore he fails, and becomes a dealer in land. Though he came out to pray, he soon turns to trade, and the zeal of his first love evaporates; or if it assume a still more respectable tone, it will, perhaps, be like the following description of the missionary in Loochoo, by Bayard Taylor, the result of what he saw in 1854.

"The same evening," says Bayard Taylor in 1854, "a native boat came off, bringing Dr. Bettelheim, the sole European resident on the island. He was a missionary who had been placed there by a society of English naval officers who, about seven years ago, formed the design of Christianizing those parts, and selected the doctor as their first instrument. It was eighteen months since any vessel had touched at Napa; and the missionary came on board in a state of great excitement. He was received by the Commodore, and, after a stay of an hour, returned to the shore. . . . . On my return to the vessel (after an exploration of the island), I called at the residence of Dr. Bettelheim, which was a very neat cottage, furnished him by the authorities of Loo-Choo, on a slope behind Capstan Rock. His family consisted of his wife—a mild, amiable Englishwoman—and two children. The house was plain, but comfortable, and the view of the neighbouring rock enchanting; yet I could not but doubt whether anything can atone for such a complete removal from the world of civilized men. Even the zeal of the missionary must flag when it is exercised in vain. After seven years' labour, all the impression which Dr. Bettelheim appears to have produced upon the natives is expressed in their request, touching from its very earnestness—'Take this man away from among us!'"*

What a different contrast to this is the account of the missionary labours of the Abbé Huc and his brother missionary through Tartary and China. Their labour, their zeal, their self-devotion, is indeed of a standard which commends itself to all. The Catholic looks at it with delight, for it is to him but the natural continuation of the old missionary zeal of the Church. The Protestant looks upon it with astonishment, as containing something quite new and unheard-of in the annals of missionary labour. These missionary details have been for some years before the public, and have been read both in this country and in Europe with the greatest delight. The work which is now submitted to the American public is the result of the missionary experience of Abbé Huc in China.

* "India, China, and Japan," by Bayard Taylor, pp. 366–369.

It has enabled him to unfold many particulars connected with the missions in that country which were before unknown. From the nature of its contents and from the varied knowledge of its learned author, it must find a home in every Catholic family, and be read by every one who desires to know the state of Christianity in that country, which is now engaging in an especial manner the attention of both the old and the new world.

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CHRISTIANITY

IN

CHINA, TARTARY AND THIBET.

CHAPTER I.

The Doctrine of the Redemption of Men diffused over the whole world. — The Preaching of the Jewish Nation. — Indian Poets. — Virgil. — The Sibyls. — Extract from the "Annals of China." — The world in expectation of the Messiah. — Legend of the Apostleship of St. Thomas. — Proofs of the Preaching of St. Thomas in India. — Archæological Proofs. — Medal of King Gondaphorus. — Probability of the Apostleship of St. Thomas in China. — Frequent relations between the East and the West at the commencement of the Christian era. — Consequences of these relations. — St. Pantenus and other Missionaries in the East. — Nestorian and Catholic Preachers in China.

The Gospel of the Christian religion, when preached successively to all the nations of the earth, excited no astonishment, for it had been everywhere prophesied, and was universally expected. A Divine Incarnation, the birth of a Man-God, was the common faith of humanity,—the great dogma that under forms, more or less mysterious, appears in the oldest modes of worship, and may be traced in the most ancient traditions. The Messiah, the Redeemer promised to fallen man in the terrestrial Paradise, had been announced uninterruptedly from age to age; and the nation specially chosen to be the depositary of this promise had spread the hope abroad among men for centuries before its fulfilment; such was, under Provr

dence, the result of the great revolutions which agitated the Jews, and dispersed them over all Asia and the world at large.

In the year 719 (B. C.), Salmanassar, King of the Assyrians, seized upon Samaria, and transported the inhabitants into the most remote village of Media. In 676 (B. C.), Assaharaddon dispersed the remnant of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel over Persia, Media, and the distant provinces of the East.

At length, in 606, began the captivity of Babylon, when Nebuchadnezzar carried away the greater part of the Jewish nation, and among them the princes, priests, and even prophets, into his own dominions, which at that time extended as far as Media.

The Israelites of the ten tribes met in the sorrowful days of their captivity, and by the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept together when they remembered Sion. Dispersed afterwards over the whole East, they proceeded in numerous caravans to Persia, India, Thibet, and even China. In our own time there have been found, in all these countries, traces of the ancient migrations of the Jewish people.

Thus as early as the seventh century before the Christian era, the captivity of the Jews had had the effect of disseminating the books, the doctrines, and the prophecies of that people among all the inhabitants of Asia, as if to re-animate the ancient faith, and restore to men their hopes of a Redeemer. The biblical traditions accompanied the children of Israel throughout all their wanderings; travelled with them through Persia, India, and Tartary, and by both routes to China; at the same time that they penetrated into Egypt, Asia Minor, and Greece, and through Greece to the West and North of Europe. At length, according to Strabo (who wrote in the time of Pompey and Cæsar), "the Jews were scattered into all cities; and it was not easy to find a spot on the earth which had not received them, and where they were not settled." Thus a current of the truth had been felt over the

whole surface of the globe; the human race had begun to awaken from its supine slumbers, and to thrill with the presentiment of its redemption.

If there were anything to be surprised at, it would be that after this men should manifest surprise at finding, among all nations, and in all modes of worship, biblical fragments, and ideas that may be called Christian. The wonder would be if it were not so. "God," says St. Paul, "has not left himself without witness among the Gentiles;" and according to the prophecy of Jacob, the Redeemer was to be "the expectation of the nations."

When the Christ appeared, it was not only in Judea, among the Hebrews, that he was looked for; he was expected also at Rome, among the Goths and Scandinavians, in India, in China, in High Asia especially, where almost all religious systems are founded on the dogma of a Divine Incarnation. Long before the coming of the Messiah, a reconciliation of man with a Saviour, a King of righteousness and peace, had been announced throughout the world. This expectation is often mentioned in the Puranas, the mythological books of India. Sometimes the earth is represented in them as mourning, that by the weight of human iniquities accumulated upon her she is pressed down into *Patala*, the hell of the Hindoos. The gods themselves complain of the oppression of the giants; and Vishnu consoles the earth as well as the gods by assuring them that a Saviour will come to redress their wrongs, and put an end to the tyranny of the demons (*Dartyas*); that for this end he will become incarnate in the house of a shepherd, and be brought up amidst pastoral people. Confucius, in his writings, laments the loss of the *Sacred Tripod*, by which he probably meant the idea of the Tri-une God; and he announces to the Hundred Families,* that the Saint, *par excellence*, is to be born in the West.

* An expression designating the Chinese nation.

By degrees, as the time approached, the Poets, those half divine seers (*mens divinior*) who draw their inspirations from the traditions of all nations, began to sing the birth of the Saviour of men; and to send from one end of the world to the other prophetic echoes of the marvellous event expected. In the Indian poem called *Barta-Sastra*,* after a long detail of the woes and disorders of the Age of Iron (*Kaly-Younga*) a Hindoo sage, addressing himself to *Darma Raja*, one of the greatest Kings of India, expresses himself as follows:—

"Then shall be born a Brahmin, in the city of Sambhala. This shall be the Vishnu Yesu; he shall possess the Divine Scriptures and all the sciences, without having employed to learn them as much time as it takes to pronounce a single word. That is why he shall be called the *Sarva Buddha*—he who knows in perfection all things. Then this Vishnu Yesu, conversing with the race of man, shall purge the earth of sinners (which would be impossible to any other than him), and shall cause truth and justice to reign upon it; and shall offer the sacrifice of the horse, and shall subject the universe to Buddha. Nevertheless, when he shall have attained old age, he shall withdraw into the Desert, to do penance; and this is the order that the Vishnu Yesu shall establish among men. He shall establish virtue and truth in the midst of the Brahmins, and restore the four Castes within the limits of their law. Then the first age will be restored. The Supreme King will render the sacrifice so common to all nations, that even the wildernesses shall not be deprived of it. The Brahmins, established in virtue, shall employ themselves only in the ceremonies of religion and sacrifice; they shall cause penitence, and other virtues, which follow in the train of truth, to flourish; and they shall spread abroad the splendour of the Holy Scriptures. The Seasons shall succeed each other in an

* *Barta-Sastra* in the 8th vol., entitled *Arania-parva*, or narrative of the Adventures of the Forest.

invariable order; the rain in due time shall inundate the fields, the harvest in due time shall pour forth abundance. Milk shall flow at the pleasure of those who desire it; the earth, as in the first age, shall be intoxicated with joy and prosperity, and all nations shall taste of ineffable delights." (*Kaly-Younga* and *Krita-Younga* of the Hindoos.)

Whilst the Indian poet Maricandeya sung thus on the banks of the Ganges, Virgil was making the shores of the Tiber resound with nearly the same strain.

Ultima Cumæi venit jam carminis ætas;
Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.
Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:
Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto.
Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum
Desinet, ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,
Casta fave Lucina: tuus jam regnat Apollo.
Teque adeo decus hoc ævi, te consule, inibit,
Pollio; et incipient magni procedere menses:
Te duce, si qua manent, sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.
Ille deûm vitam accipiet, divisque videbit
Permixtos heroas, et ipse videbitur illis
Pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.
At tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu,
Errantes hederas passim cum baccare, tellus
Mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho.
Ipsæ lacte domum referent distenta capellæ
Ubera; nec magnos metuent armenta leones.
Ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.
Occidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni
Occidet; Assyrium vulgo nascetur amomum.
* * * * * *
Aggredere o magnos, aderit jam tempus honores,
Cara deûm suboles, magnum Jovis incrementum!
Adspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum,
Terrasque, tractusque maris, cœlumque profundum:
Adspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo.

VIRGIL, ECLOGA, 4.

The supreme age foretold by the Cumæan sibyl, he exclaims, has at length arrived; then he celebrates the birth of the child who shall live the life of the gods. Under his auspices "the traces of our crimes shall be effaced. The

world shall be delivered from eternal alarm. The serpent shall perish," &c.

These words are remarkable enough to have struck many Christian apologists; and though Virgil doubtless had in view nothing more than the praise of Augustus, his Eclogue was a harmonious echo of the prophetic rumours that were floating over the Roman world. All he did was to turn to the glory of his hero, Cæsar, the Pacificator of the Empire, the predictions that really related to the Saviour of men.

The age of Gold foretold by the Sibyl of Cumæ, and so melodiously sung by Virgil, was announced in the mysterious verses of all the sibyls, many of which were at that time extant, and enjoyed great celebrity. They were to be found in Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, Elis, and according to Pausanias, even in Judea. These prophetesses, dwelling in the midst of the pagan world, drew their inspiration from the antique faith of their respective countries; they were collectors of the primitive traditions which all referred to the redemption of the human race by a Divine Incarnation; so that they often unconsciously proclaimed the truth, and foretold future events. The great artists of the Middle Ages, who had so profound a comprehension of what related to Christianity, never failed to place on the magnificent stained windows of our cathedrals, the most renowned sibyls of antiquity by the side of the prophets of the Old Testament.

A short time before the birth of Jesus Christ, not only the Jews, but even the Romans, on the authority of the Sibylline books and the decision of the Sacred College of Augurs, in Etruria, considered that this important event was approaching. The capital of the Roman world was alarmed by prodigies, as well as by ancient prophecies, announcing that an emanation of the Divinity was about to appear, and a regeneration of the world to take place. One day the Senate was assembled to deliberate on the imminent danger that threatened the Republic, and the whole world, of having to receive a king. Nigidius

Figulus (an intimate friend of Cicero, at that time Consul), having heard Octavius excuse himself for coming so late, on account of his wife having been seized with the pains of child-birth, exclaimed: "You have then been bringing into the world a lord and master for us."

Nigidius enjoyed a high reputation at Rome, as one of the most learned men of the Republic; indeed, his proficiency in the mathematical and other sciences based upon them, was such that he was supposed to be an adept in magic. This exclamation from him threw the Conscript Fathers into such alarm, that for months afterwards they kept repeating that "Nature was about to bring forth, and to place a king on the throne of the world." They added, that the same thing had been announced in the verses of the Sibyl, and that, moreover, from all parts of the world, even the most distant, there had arrived numerous oracles which repeated the same prediction. The Senate, terrified by these rumours, and by the prodigies which were reported to have taken place in Rome, issued a decree, forbidding fathers of families to bring up any child that should be born for a year, or to adopt any that should be found exposed. Those Conscript Fathers, however, whose wives were then in a state of pregnancy, contrived to prevent the registration of this decree, in the hope that this king-child might be one of theirs.*

At the same epoch Cicero writes in his book "Of the Republic," "There shall not be one law at Rome, another at Athens; one now, another then; but one law, immutable and eternal, shall rule all nations, throughout all time; and he who has made, manifested, and promulgated this law, shall be the sole common master and supreme sovereign of all. . .

* Auctor est Julius Marathus, ante paucos quam (Augustus) nasceretur menses, prodigium Romæ factum publice, quo denuntiabatur regem Populo Romano naturam parturire; senatum exteritum sensuisse, ne quis illo anno genitus educaretur; eos qui gravidas uxores haberent quo ad se quisque spem traheret curasse ne senatus consultum ad ærarium deferretur.—SUETONIUS, *Life of Augustus*, 94.

Whoever shall refuse to obey him, must fly from himself, and renounce his human nature; and by that he will become subject to great punishments, even though he should escape what here below is called by that name."*

India, the Roman empire, the civilised world in fact, was thus looking for a renovation of humanity; and it is very remarkable that, precisely at that time, the most distant people of the east, the *Seres* or Chinese, sent ambassadors to Rome to seek the friendship of Augustus. A Roman author tells us expressly;† and the annals of China show a high probability of such a circumstance having really taken place. Towards the period when Pompey had extended the dominion of Rome to the western shores of the Caspian Sea, the Chinese had approached the eastern, and thus the two great nations were brought into proximity with each other. At the very moment when Augustus was closing the temple of war, two immense empires, Rome in the West, and China in the East, were thus taking each other by the hand, as if to keep the world in the stillness of expectation.‡ China and Confucius were looking for the saint from the West. Rome was expecting a monarch from the East; and neither one nor the other was mistaken. The subject of the magnificent Indian epics, the Incarnation of the Divinity, was really about to be accomplished in Judea, between the East and the West.

The Messiah was actually born in a poor shed at Bethlehem, near Jerusalem; and immediately three "kings of the East" three magi, who had been living in anxious expectation

* Cic. de Rep., 1, 3. † Florus, liv. 4. chap. 12.

‡ The English reader will remember the lines in Milton's Hymn of the Nativity,—

"No war or battle's sound
Was heard, the world around
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng,
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew, their sov'reign Lord was by."—*Trans.*

of the event, betook themselves to the spot where they were told they should find the Divine infant. At the same time, the emperor of the Indies, alarmed by the general diffusion of prophecies, which he supposed to menace the fall of his empire and his own ruin, sent out messengers to inquire whether in any place such a child had really been born, and if they found him, to put him to death. The horrible massacre ordered by Herod, from the same motives, is well known.

Finally, some years afterwards, a Chinese emperor himself accompanied an embassy to the West, in order to seek the supreme saint, who was to be born in that part of the world. This fact is thus recorded in the annals of the Celestial Empire:—

"In the twenty-fourth year of the reign of Tchao-Wang, of the dynasty of the Tcheou (corresponding with the year 1029 B. C.), on the eighth day of the fourth moon, a light appeared in the south-west, which illuminated the king's palace. The monarch, struck by its splendour, interrogated the sages who were skilled in foretelling future events. They then showed him books in which it was written that this prodigy signified the appearance of a great saint in the West, whose religion was to be introduced into this country a thousand years after his birth.

"In the fifty-third year of the reign of Mou-Wang, which is that of the Black Ape (951 B. C.), on the fifteenth day of the second moon, Buddha manifested himself. One thousand and thirteen years afterwards, under the dynasty of Hau-Ming, in the seventh year of the reign of Young-Ping (A. D. 64), on the fifteenth day of the first moon, the king saw in a dream a man whose appearance was that of radiant gold, like the sun, and whose stature was more than ten feet. This man entered the king's palace, and said, 'My religion shall spread abroad in this country.'

"The next day the king questioned the sages; and one of them named Fou-y, opening the annals of the empire in the

reign of Tchao-Wang, pointed out the connection between the circumstance narrated therein and the king's dream. The king consulted the ancient books, and having found the passage corresponding with the time of Tchao-Wang, was filled with joy. Then he sent the officers Tsa-Yn, and Thsin-King, the learned Wang-Tsun, and fifteen other men to the West, to obtain information concerning the doctrine of Buddha.

"In the tenth year (A. D. 67), these emissaries being sent into Central India, procured a statue of Buddha, and some Sanscrit books, which they conveyed on a white horse to the city of Lo-yang."* The Chinese ambassadors, however, lost sight of the true object of their mission; they suffered themselves to be seduced by the priests of India; and from that epoch is to be dated the introduction of Buddhism into China.

The idea of a Divine Incarnation prevailed equally among the Gothic tribes of the North. They were so perplexed and agitated by prophetic rumours from the East, that they sent emissaries to seek for the divine being so impatiently expected over the whole world; and it was these strange embassies that formed the foundation of the Edda, which concludes with these words: "The new gods then took the names of the ancient ones, and appeared like real gods."

The fact was, that audacious men, profiting by the preconceived idea generally prevalent, gave themselves out for the promised Messiah, and that the divinity of Odin was acknowledged in the kingdom of Glyphe, and Trenmor was deified by Fingal.

That a Saviour, and a regeneration of the human race, was expected in all parts of the civilised world, in consequence of ancient prophecies, cannot be denied. Such an event was confidently looked for in the West and the East, in Persia, India, and China, and even among the wandering tribes of Upper Asia In the intermediate countries, as among the Hebrews,

* This is the city now called Kai-Fong-Fou, the capital of Ho-nan.

it was the fundamental doctrine of religion; and thus, thanks to this general expectation and preparation, Christianity was able to spread itself with facility over the whole surface of the earth.

Its advent was more adapted to satisfy the human mind than to astonish it; and there was nothing to prevent the words of the apostles from being heard, according to the text of Holy Writ, to the utmost confines of the world:—

Et in fines orbis terræ verba eorum.

The preaching of the Gospel was, in fact, heard in the most remote countries, and probably in the very heart of the Chinese Empire,—an empire at that time vaster, and perhaps more civilised, than that of Rome.

The propagation of the Christian faith in Upper Asia, is a subject that has been very little studied. People have generally contented themselves with supposing that the Gospel was not carried there till a recent time; and it is nevertheless now discovered that to a certainty the doctrines of Jesus Christ were preached from the very beginning to the nations of the utmost East.

The light has often shone in the midst of darkness, and unfortunately the darkness has "comprehended it not."

Abdias, in his history of the apostolic labours, says that St. Thomas,* while he was at Jerusalem, received a divine command to go to India, in order to show the light of truth to that people, still sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. "Now I myself recollect having seen a certain book in which the voyage of St. Thomas to India and the things he did in that country were described.† As this book was not received

* The history was published for the first time by Wolfgang Lazius, under the title of *Adiæ Babyloniæ, Episcopi et Apostolorum Discipuli, de Historia Certaminis Apostolici, libri decem; Julio Africano interprete* (Basiliæ, 1552.) Fabricius published it again with critical notes, in the 2d vol. p. 388 of his *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti.*

† "Probably," says Fabricius, "he here alludes to the 'Acts of St. Thomas,' which are to be found in Greek in some libraries."

on account of its tediousness (*ob verbositatem*), I will leave out superfluous things, and content myself with relating that which is certain, and which may be agreeable to the reader, and useful to the Church." After this preamble, Abdias gives the legend, as follows: "When St. Thomas the Apostle was at Jerusalem, our Lord appeared to him, and said: 'Gondaphorus, the King of India, has sent his minister Abbas to Syria, in order to seek for men instructed in the art of architecture. Go, I will send thee to him.' St. Thomas answered, 'Lord, send me anywhere, except to India;' and our Lord said to him, 'Go, I will watch over thee, and when thou shalt have converted the Indians, thou shalt come to me to receive as a recompense the crown of martyrdom;' and St. Thomas said, 'Lord, I am thy servant; thy will be done.' And as Abbas, the servant of King Gondaphorus, was going across the market-place, our Lord met him, and said to him, 'Young man, what dost thou wish to buy?' And Abbas replied, 'My master has sent me hither, to bring to him workmen skilled in the art of masonry, and who may build him a palace like those that there are at Rome.' Then our Lord showed him St. Thomas, and said that he was well skilled in architecture.

"The holy apostle and the minister of the King Gondaphorus embarked; and Thomas converted on the way a great number of infidels, especially at Aden, a town situated at the entrance of the Red Sea, where they stopped some time. They arrived at length on the coast of India; and in the first city they entered, they were present at the marriage of the king's daughter. St. Thomas preached the Gospel, and performed many wonderful miracles, which effected numerous conversions, and amongst others that of the king; and the newly-married pair also received baptism. A long time afterwards the princess, who had been named Pelagiana, took the holy veil, and suffered martyrdom. The husband, called Denis, was consecrated bishop of the town.

"The Apostle and Abbas, however, went on their way to King Gondaphorus. Thomas was presented to him as an architect; and the king entrusted him with great treasures, in order to provide for the expenses of a magnificent palace, which he ordered him to construct. Gondaphorus then departed into another province; and Thomas, instead of busying himself about the construction of the palace, traversed the country, preaching the Gospel, healing the sick, and distributing the treasures to the poor, for the space of two years, during which the king remained absent. He converted to the faith an innumerable multitude. When Gondaphorus came back and asked him about the palace, the apostle said, 'the palace is built, but thou wilt only inhabit it in eternity;' and thereupon the king, who regarded him as a magician, ordered him to be flung into a horrible dungeon, flayed alive, and burnt.

"In the meantime, however, *Sud*, the brother of King Gondaphorus died; and the king ordered him a magnificent funeral.

"Now on the fourth day, while the obsequies were being performed, suddenly, to the astonishment and terror of all present, the dead man arose, and said to the king, 'That man whom you intended to flay and burn alive is the friend of God. The angels who serve God took me to Paradise, and showed me a superb palace, enriched with gold and silver, and precious stones; and whilst I stood struck with admiration before so much magnificence, they said to me, 'That is the palace which Thomas built for your brother the King Gondaphorus, but he has rendered himself unworthy of it; if you wish to live in it, we will pray God to resuscitate you, in order that you may purchase it of your brother, by restoring to him the money he gave for the building of it, and which he thinks he has lost.'

"The king, on hearing these words, rushed to the prison into which he had thrown the Apostle, eagerly released him

from his chains, and besought him to accept a robe of honour 'Dost thou not know,' said Thomas to him, 'that those who wish to have power over things celestial care nothing for those which are carnal and terrestrial?'

"The king threw himself at the feet of the Apostle, and implored his pardon; and when Gondaphorus and his brother had received baptism, Thomas said to them, 'There are in heaven innumerable palaces, prepared from the beginning of the world; and they may be bought at the price of faith and alms: your riches may precede you thither, but cannot follow you.'

"Thomas afterwards traversed various kingdoms of India, preaching the Gospel everywhere, working many miracles, and converting the nations to Jesus Christ. At last he was persecuted by a king named Mesdeus, who ordered him to worship a statue of the sun. The apostle consented to kneel down before it, and to sacrifice to it, if the statue did not, at his command, fall into dust. But that miracle really took place. Then there arose a great tumult among the people, the greater part of whom took part with St. Thomas. The king ordered him to be thrown into prison, and then delivered him to four soldiers, with orders to go and put him to death on a neighbouring mountain. The apostle remained long in prayer; and then the soldiers approaching him, pierced him through with their lances, and the martyr fell and breathed his last. His disciples buried him with tears, after having poured over him a number of precious perfumes; and the new Church of India subsequently prospered under the direction of Siforus, a priest, and Zuzanes, a deacon, whom the apostle had ordained at the moment when he went to suffer death on the mountain."

Such is the narrative of Abdias, and though, of course, the legend cannot be accepted entire, there is probably a certain amount of truth in it, surrounded as it is by the fanciful addi-

tions a story usually receives in passing from mouth to mouth, and travelling a great distance.

The circumstance of St. Thomas having preached at all in India has been frequently called in question by writers deserving of attention; but we find it supported by so much evidence, that it seems difficult for an unprejudiced mind to refuse credit to a fact guaranteed by such excellent historical authorities. All the Greek, Latin, and Syriac monuments proclaim that St. Thomas was the apostle of the Indies, who carried the torch of faith into the remote regions where he suffered martyrdom. Some writers have affirmed that he prosecuted his apostolical labours as far even as China; and the mission and the martyrdom of St. Thomas in the Indies have been alluded to in all the martyrologies, and in the ancient liturgies, which form the most pure and authentic source of Christian tradition.

In the Syriac Jacobite service for the festival of St. Thomas, the third of July, we read the following words:*—"Thomas, whose memory we this day celebrate, having been sent to India by the Lord, was sold for a slave. He formed the plan of an excellent palace, of which God elevated the summit to heaven. He was afterwards, after the example of the Lord, pierced with a lance; and with the title of Apostle, he obtained the crown of the martyr." It is evident these words allude to some of the most striking features of the legend, as related by Abdias.

The Nestorians chant in the Vesper service for St. Thomas's day, "Thanks be to thy preaching, O Thomas, the Indians have breathed the perfume of spiritual life, and after renouncing the customs of the heathens, have seen chastity flourish among them." In the nocturnal part of the same service, we find these words:—"Thomas undertook the voyage to India in order to overthrow the temples of demons, and extirpate

* Assemani, "Bibliotheca Orientalis," vol. ii., *passim*.

the licentiousness which prevailed among both men and women. The Indians, who, on account of the excessive heat of the country, had been accustomed to go entirely naked, learned from seeing Thomas clothed, the value of modesty and reserve."

Gregorius Bar-Hebræsus expresses himself in these terms in his Syriac Chronicle (par. 3. chap. i.):—

"Thomas the Apostle, the first pontiff of the East. We learn by the book of the preaching of the holy apostles, that in the second year after the Ascension of our Lord, the Apostle Thomas announced the tidings of the Gospel in the East, and preached to the Indians."

Finally, we find these words in the Roman breviary:—"The Apostle Thomas, surnamed Didymus, by birth a Galilean, preached the Gospel of Christ in many provinces; he proclaimed the faith to the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Hircanians, and Bactrians. Finally, he went to the Indians, and instructed them in the Christian religion. The king of that nation having condemned him to death, he was pierced with arrows at Calamina, and thus glorified his apostleship by the crown of martyrdom."

These numerous testimonies from the most ancient liturgies afford assuredly a strong presumption in favour of the opinion that St. Thomas was really the Apostle of India; and this presumption is still further corroborated, when we see that opinion supported by traditions ascending to the very earliest period of Christianity.

In the Paschal Chronicle is a fragment of a work of Bishop Dorotheus (born 254), in which he relates the acts and journeyings of the Apostles, and this is what he says of St. Thomas:—

"The Apostle Thomas, after having preached the Gospel to the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Germanians,* Bactrians, and Magi, suffered martyrdom at Calamina, a town of India."

* An agricultural people of Persia, mentioned by Herodotus, I. 125.

St. Jerome, who died in the year 420, speaks of the mission of St. Thomas as of a fact universally known at that time. He even, in his catalogue of sacred writers, mentions Calamina, a town of India, as the place of his death.* Admitting that this passage may not have been written by the illustrious doctor himself, but possibly added by the Greeks, it must in that case be attributed to Sophronius; and it will still serve to prove that Sophronius and the Greeks did not entertain any doubt of the fact of the preaching of St. Thomas in India. It was also, undoubtedly, the opinion of St. Jerome; for, in speaking of the immensity of the Saviour regarded as God, he says these words, of which no one will dispute the authenticity:—"The Son of God remained then with the apostles for forty days after his resurrection, at the same time that he was with the angels in the bosom of his Father. He was present in all places, *with Thomas in India*, with Peter at Rome, with Paul in Illyria, with Titus in Crete, with Andrew in Achaia, and with every apostle, and every preacher of the Gospel in all the regions they traversed."†

Theodoret‡ was of the same opinion as St. Jerome. In speaking of the preaching of the apostles, he expresses himself thus:—"They have induced not only the Romans, and those who live under their empire, but also the Scythians, Sarmatians, *Indians*, Ethiopians, Persians, Seres, Hyrcanians, Britons, Cimmerians, and Germans, to receive the law of the crucified Saviour; and in short have preached it to all nations, and to every class of men."

Theodoret, it is true, speaks of the apostles in general, but St. Thomas is the only one to whom the mission of India has ever been ascribed, and the learned Baronius§ observes truly, that to St Thomas alone can his words apply. Nicephorus‖,

* Sanctus Hier. Catal. Script. eccl. i. 120.
† Sanctus Hier. Marcell. Epit. 148. v. 8. p. 144.
‡ Theodoret, Serm. 9. p. 125.
§ Baronius, "Annales," anno 44, No. 38.
‖ Hist. vol. ii. ch. 4.

in the same manner, declares St. Thomas to be the Apostle of the Indians; and Gaudentius* says, like Sophronius, that he died in India at the town of Calamina, which is no other than Meliapour, a place at a short distance from Madras.

To these clear and positive testimonies of authors in the earliest ages of Christianity, must be added that of the unvarying tradition of all ages. Thus, in the seventh century, we find Gregory of Tours, the father of French history, speaking of a worthy man named Theodorus, who had visited the tomb of St. Thomas in India. In the year 833, Sighelm, Bishop of Shireburn†, was also sent thither by the Anglo-Saxon king, Alfred the Great, in fulfilment of a vow; and was charged to afford succour to the descendants of the Christians converted by St. Thomas. Is it credible that such pilgrimages should have been made to countries so distant, and at such various epochs, if there had not been a general belief in the apostleship and martyrdom of St. Thomas in India? and, moreover, this very church of St. Thomas on the Coromandel coast, is mentioned by two Mussulmans who visited India in the ninth century, a short time after the Bishop of Shireburn.

The celebrated Venetian, Marco Polo, who traversed Upper Asia in the thirteenth century, says, in speaking of Aden in Arabia, that St. Thomas is believed to have preached there before he visited India.

"The body of St. Thomas,"‡ adds Marco Polo, "lies in the province of Malabar, near an insignificant little town, of which the inhabitants and the traders are few in number, since there is very little traffic to be done; but devotion attracts thither a multitude of Christians. The Saracens, too, hold the spot in profound veneration, saying that the holy apostle was a

* Gaud., Serm. 17.

† "Chronicon Saxonicum," anno 883, by Turner. "De Gestis Regum Anglorum," c. 44., by William of Malmesbury.

‡ "Le cors meisser Saint Thomas la apostres, est en la provence de Meabar en une petite ville, car ne i a gueires homes ne mercaant," &c. "Recueil des Voyages et de Mémoires Publié par la Société de Geographie," vol. i. p. 208.

great prophet; and they call him '*avariia*' which in their language signifies 'holy man.'"

Towards the same period, a Dominican missionary, who had travelled over India, and carried the light of the Gospel even into the interior of Tartary, wrote thus to the monks of his order*:—"In this kingdom of India St. Thomas the apostle preached the faith, and converted to God many princes. But as they have been hitherto far from the countries where this faith was held, their Christianity has gradually declined, until at present there is only one small town where it is still professed. All the other towns and cities have forsaken it."

This town of India, where, according to Frere Ricold, Christianity was still preserved, was doubtless Calamina, where the apostle suffered martyrdom, and where his body reposed.† Subsequently, this town became known under the name of Meliapour, or the town of peacocks.‡ It has also sometimes been called *San Thomé;* and in the middle ages, the Arabs named it *Betama*, or *Beti-Thoma*, the house or Church of St. Thomas.

The apostleship of St. Thomas in India appears, therefore, to have been fully believed, not only by the Christians of Europe, but also by the Arabs, the disciples of Mahomet; and the tradition has been especially perpetuated in the kingdoms of Madura and the Carnatic, and many races still glorify themselves on the fact of their ancestors having been enlightened by the apostle. From age to age it has been believed at Meliapour that St. Thomas was put to death on a hill near the town, and the practice of making annual visits to his tomb has been retained. According to the testimony of Father Pons§, the Brahmins stated that there were among the books

* "L'hystoire mervellleuse du Grant Caan," feuillet 3.

† According to Rufin, who went to Syria in 371, and resided there twenty-five years, the relics of St. Thomas had been brought from India, and deposited at Edessa. But, as we shall see, he spoke only of a part of them.

‡ Called Meliar-Pha by Ptolemy.

§ "Lettres Edifiantes," vol. xxii. p. 305. edit. in—18.

deposited in their library at Cangiapour, some very ancient historical works, in which mention was made of St. Thomas and of his martyrdom, and the place of his burial.

Many facts connected with the epoch of the Portuguese conquest, tend to confirm the tradition of the apostleship and death of St. Thomas in India. Alfonso Albuquerque, whose exploits have procured for him the surname of the Great, seized upon Goa in 1510, and strengthened it by new fortifications. In digging for the foundations of these, a cross of bronze, bearing the image of the crucified Saviour, was found; and placed by the governor in the church, which he built in thanksgiving for his success. The body of St. Thomas was not discovered till 1521. It was then found at a considerable depth under ground, beneath the ruins of a vast and ancient church at Meliapour. There was a sepulchre, in which, amongst lime and sand, were found some remarkably white bones, the iron point of a lance, with part of the wood attached, and a clay vase filled with earth. The coincidence of this discovery with the local traditions of the presence of the body of St. Thomas at Meliapour, and the arrangements of his tomb, left in the opinion of the Portuguese no reason to doubt the identity of these remains with those of the apostle. They were, therefore, placed in a shrine, enriched with silver, and subsequently taken to Goa, where they were deposited in a church dedicated to St. Thomas.*

Du Jarric† relates, after Osorio, the historian of Emmanuel, and Bishop of Sylves in Algarve,—that towards the year 1543, there was presented to Martin Alphonse de Sousa, Lieutenant-general of the Portuguese possessions, a copper lance, on which were engraved some worn and ancient letters that nobody could read. A Jew, versed in the language and antiquities of India, however, at length succeeded in making out the sense of them, and it appeared they related to a dona-

* Maffei, "Histoire des Indes Orientales," vol. i. p. 81—84.

† Du Jarric, "Histoire des Choses Memorables," &c. vol. i. p. 502.

tion of a piece of land, whereon to build a temple to the true God, made by an Indian king to St. Thomas.

Du Jarric adds, that towards the year 1548, when Jean de Castro was governor of the Indies, some Portuguese of Meliapour wished to build a chapel upon a hill near the town, where they said an apostle had been killed by the Brahmins. On this occasion, they found a stone, with a cross sculptured in relief upon it, two feet long and a foot and a half broad, with the four extremities ornamented with open fleur de lys, and surmounted by a dove, which appeared to peck the top. Round this token of salvation was a triple arcade, and beyond that some strange characters that no one could read.

In order to discover the signification of these letters, the captain and vicar of the town of Meliapour, applied to a Brahmin of the kingdom of Narsinga, who was much famed for his learning. He replied that they were hieroglyphical signs, and gave the translation of them thus:—

"Since the law of the Christians appeared in the world, and thirty years afterwards, on the 25th of the month of December, the Apostle St. Thomas died at Meliapour, where there was the knowledge of God; a change of law, and the destruction of the demons. God was born of the Virgin Mary, was under obedience to her for thirty years, and was an eternal God. This God taught his law to twelve apostles, and one of them came to Meliapour, with a pilgrim's staff in his hand, and there built a church; and the king of Malabar, and the king of Coromandel, and the king of Pandi, and other various nations and sects, determined of their own will to submit to the law of St. Thomas, a holy and penitent man. The time came when St. Thomas died by the hands of a Brahmin, and his blood formed a cross." Another learned person from a distant part of the country was then sent for, and without having any communication with the first, or knowing his interpretation, gave one to the same effect. In 1562, the bishop of Cochin sent to the Cardinal Henry, at that time infant, and

afterwards king of Portugal, the authentic vouchers, attesting these facts; the historian Osorio had had them in his own hands, and the other Portuguese historians are unanimous concerning them.

After a tradition so steady and consistent, and such an amount of evidence to the same purport, it certainly does seem to us that there would be great temerity in denying the fact of the apostleship and martyrdom of St. Thomas in India. This legend of Abdias appears on examination to be fundamentally confirmed by as incontestible proofs as can be required for the most authentic facts of history.

The existence even of the king Gondaphorus, named in the legend, has recently been rendered indisputable. The discovery is due to M. Reinaud, member of the Institute, a learned Orientalist, whose writings have always been remarkable for erudition, perspicuity, and candour, and who expresses himself thus in a Mémoire published in 1849:—

"Amongst medals recently discovered, may be mentioned some of the Indo-Scythian kings, who reigned a short time after Kanerkès in the valley of the Indus, and especially those of a prince named Gondaphorus. There are medals of the same kind in the National Library at Paris; and, according to a tradition which ascends to the very earliest ages of the Christian era, the apostle St. Thomas went to preach the Gospel in India, and suffered martyrdom on the coast of Coromandel.

"Now the Acts of the life of St. Thomas, which are extant both in Greek and Latin, mention a king named Gondaphorus. According to these Acts, St. Thomas, being at Jerusalem, embarked at the nearest port, and arrived on the coast of the Peninsula of Hindostan. Thence he travelled into the interior, and visited a king named Gondaphorus, who embraced Christianity; and after that he went to another province of India, where he received the crown of martyrdom. It will be seen that this narrative is in no way incompatil le with that trans-

mitted to us by tradition, and indicated also by archæological monuments."*

Certainly not; and not only not incompatible, but on the contrary, in the most perfect harmony with them. Everything tends to prove that St. Thomas was veritably the first apostle of India. This opinion says M. Coquebert-Montbret,† has in its favour an unvarying tradition, and the suffrages of the majority of Catholics; and of late years it has obtained some favour even with Protestants: for example, M. Hohlenberg, in a dissertation on the origin and destiny of the Christian Church in India, and from Mr. Claude Buchanan in his "Christian Researches in India." (Second Edition, p. 104.)

We have said that the human race had been prepared from its commencement to receive the fundamental truths of Christianity. Independently of the relations established beyond the limits of the Celestial Empire between several Chinese and the Israelites whom God dispersed amongst the nations to make known his name and prepare the way for the Messiah, there have been Jews in China, perhaps, from the seventh century before the Christian era. Many of these Jews, says Father Gaubil (in his "Chinese Chronology," p. 267.), were employed in the highest military offices, and there were some among them who became governors of provinces, ministers of state, bachelors and doctors. These messengers of the truth were not wanting to their mission, and they communicated so much information, that Confucius was enabled to announce in his writings, that there should be born, in the West, a saint who had been expected more than three thousand years. "Vast and extensive as the heavens, deep as the abyss, he will be respected by all nations; the whole world will believe his

* Mémoire Géographique Historique et Scientifique sur l'Inde antérieurement, au milieu du onzième siècle de l'ere Chrétienne, d'après les Ecrivains, Arabes, Persans, et Chinois," par M. Reinaud, de l'Institut. p. 95.

† Note on the Christian converts of St. Thomas in the "Recueil des Voyages et des Mémoires de la Société de Géographie," vol. iv. p. 25.

words, all will applaud his actions. His name and his glory will extend over the whole empire, and even among the barbarians of the south and north, wherever ships and chariots can advance, and the power of man penetrate, in all places which the sky covers and the earth supports, which are enlightened by the sun and moon, and fertilised by the dew and the mist; and all beings who have blood and breath shall honour and love him. He is the equal of *Tien*" (heaven).

Is it, after this, surprising that a Chinese emperor should (in the year 65 of our era) send to the West, in search of the Saviour of men, that solemn embassy of which we have already spoken?

India, as we have endeavoured to show, was evangelised by St. Thomas; and many learned men have expressed their belief that the same apostle carried the light of Christianity as far as the Chinese empire. They ground this belief on the Chaldean books that have been found in India. The Breviary of the church of Malabar contains in fact the following words in a lesson of the nocturnal service:—

"By St. Thomas idolatrous delusion was dissipated in India.

"By St. Thomas the Chinese and Ethiopians were converted to the truth.

"By St. Thomas they received baptism, and believed and confessed the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

"By St. Thomas they have preserved the faith in one only God.

"By St. Thomas the splendours of a vivifying law have arisen over all India.

"By St. Thomas the kingdom of heaven has been extended even to China."

In the same Chaldean service for St. Thomas's day, is found the following anthem:—

"The Indians, the Chinese, the Persians, and the other *insular* people (*cæteri insulani**), offer their adorations to your holy name in commemoration of St. Thomas."

* This is quite an Oriental expression. The Bible speaks (Gen. x. 5.) of the "isles of the Gentiles," and we know that in the religious books of India, various parts of the world are regarded as so many islands, newly risen from the waters which separate them from each other, and on which they float like a ship or an aquatic plant.

The Chaldee breviary of the church of Malabar does not certainly afford any proof that St. Thomas was ever in China; but it confirms, at least, the opinion that the most distant Oriental churches regard him as their founder. The Christians of India, Persia, and Bactriana could then freely enter the Celestial Empire, and carry thither the evangelical light that had come to them from the West; and whilst St. Thomas was preaching in the India of the Ganges, and St. Bartholomew in Ethiopia and Arabia Felix, the shock of the Christian revolution was felt throughout the world. At that epoch the people of different nations had much more intercourse with each other, than has been commonly supposed, and the relations between the East and the West were much more frequent. There was apparently more individual energy then than in our days, and people did not require the aid of steam to undertake long and dangerous voyages. The natives of the banks of the Ganges were scattered over the West in much greater numbers than at present.

In the Letters of Aiciphron, we find that the Greeks frequently had Hindoos of both sexes in their families, in the quality of domestics. The latter had especially emigrated in great numbers to Colchis; and when Metellus Celer was proconsul in Gaul, fifty-nine years before Christ, the famous Ariovistus, king of the Suevi, made him a present of some Hindoos, who had been shipwrecked on the German coast. These were merchants, whose adventurous spirit had carried them to that distance from their country.

It is known that numerous embassies were sent from India to the emperors of Rome and Constantinople, down to the seventh century; but after that time, the Mussulman power, swelling and rolling on like an ocean tide, became an insurmountable obstacle to such communications.

The most famous of these embassies was that sent to Augustus by Porus, who boasted in his letter of having six kings under his authority. The object of this mission was to form

an alliance with the Roman Emperor, and as he happened to be at that time in Spain, the ambassadors followed him thither; but as they did not on that occasion succeed in their object, others were sent some years afterwards, when Augustus was at Samos.

Besides these ambassadors from Porus, there came others from *Pandeon*, a king whose territories were situated in the southern part of the peninsula; and they had in their suite a Brahmin, who chose to remain in Rome, and attach himself to the court of Augustus as an augur or soothsayer. The Emperor Claudius also received an embassy from Ceylon; and when, in A. D. 103, Trajan marched against the Parthians, some Indian princes sent ambassadors to entreat his arbitration in some difference that had arisen between themselves and their neighbours.

Antoninus Pius, Diocletian, Maximin, Theodosius, Heraclius, and Justinian also received ambassadors from India in 274; and when Aurelian took Palmyra, and made Queen Zenobia prisoner, he found in that country a body of Hindoos, whom he brought to Rome to ornament his triumph.

In the early ages of Christianity, the Indians emigrated in great numbers to the countries of the West, and the inhabitants of Europe showed the same eagerness to visit places remote from the lands of their birth, and more especially India. At the period when the apostles traversed every region of the known world, in obedience to the command of their Divine Master, "Go, and teach all nations," there existed a lively intercourse and fusion between the East and the West. Numerous caravans, impelled by the spirit of commercial enterprise, or of curiosity, travelled continually between Europe and the Indies. The Chinese were less exclusive then than they have been since, and they allowed strangers to penetrate freely into their vast empire, whilst they themselves visited neighbouring nations for the purposes of traffic. Their junks traversed the Straits of Sunda, visited the coasts of Malacca,

and carried their merchandise to the ports of Ceylon, the Gulf of Persia, and the Red Sea.

The Greeks and Romans knew them under the name of *Seres*, because silk, which was originally obtained from them, was known by that name over a great part of Asia; and still bears nearly the same appellation. The commerce between the Romans and Chinese was often carried on by the intervention of the Parthians; and thus the apostles were enabled to bear the light of the Gospel to Upper Asia, by the way of Egypt to India, and through India to China.

In urging the consideration of these facts, and insisting so much on the existence of Christian traditions, concerning the early propagation of the faith in the remotest East, we have had a special purpose in view.

Those who have studied the system of Buddhism in Upper Asia, have been often struck with the analogy, in many points, between its doctrines, moral precepts, and liturgy, and those of Christian Churches. Unbelievers have exulted at these resemblances, and have inferred immediately that Christianity was copied from the religious systems of India and China. But their triumph in this discovery, which has often served to trouble timid Christians, could only arise from want of good faith, or from ignorance. For if the primitive traditions of our race were carried to India and China by the descendants of Noah,—if the Jews were established there seven centuries before Christ,—if St. Thomas preached the Gospel there in the very first period of its existence,—if Judaism, Christianity, and the religions of Asia, were in continual juxtaposition, it is surely not difficult to imagine that the latter may have borrowed much from the Jews and Christians. In observing the various phases of the propagation of the faith in the East, it will be easy for us to show that they actually did so, and that the real fact is that Buddhism, by adorning itself with some Christian truths, has been able for many centuries to delude countless multitude of people. Men do not seek error instinc

tively; on the contrary, they have a horror of it,—and when it succeeds easily in deluding them, it is because it presents itself to them under the guise of truth.

From the various evidence we have collected, it may be considered certain, that in the time of the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles, evangelical truth was announced by St. Thomas to the nations of India. It is equally beyond a doubt that the propagation of the faith went on rapidly among all the nations of the East, if not by the preaching of the apostle himself, at least by that of his disciples,—for there were at that time such relations between the Chinese, the Indians, and the people of the West, that the former could hardly have remained ignorant of the wonderful events which had occurred at Bethlehem and Calvary, or of the miraculous resurrection of the Lord.

Be the apostleship of St. Thomas in India admitted or not, it is certain that the good tidings of the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of men, were, from the very commencement of Christianity, made known in Upper Asia. We shall see apostles and missionaries from age to age braving the perils and fatigues of the longest and most dangerous journeys, to carry over land and sea the words of eternal life. Opportunities of becoming acquainted with the truth have not been wanting to the Orientals, and yet they are still plunged in the grossest error. That East, from which we received our light, is herself in the thickest darkness; but it is not the fault of the people of the West, who have returned again and again to their aged parent; not like the poor and destitute prodigal son, but radiant in light, and with their hands full of celestial gifts.

One of the earliest apostles of the remote East, was St. Pantenus, a Sicilian by birth, who lived towards the end of the second century. He had applied himself much to the study of eloquence, and of the Stoical philosophy, and afterwards having become a Christian, entered the Church, and

employed his talents in endeavouring to throw light on the divine mysteries of Christianity. From a motive of humility, he lived, after his baptism, in the closest retirement, and Clement of Alexandria long sought for him in vain, though his search, say the writers of the time, was conducted with "the ardour of a huntsman pursuing his game in the recesses of the forest."

He at last found him in Egypt, passing a life of seclusion and solitude, devoted to prayer, meditation, and the study of holy books. Up to that time Clement had studied under various masters, but having now formed an intimate friendship with Pantenus, he discovered in him such great talents, such a rich treasury of divine wisdom, that he thought he should need no other guide to lead him to the summit of Christian philosophy. Thenceforward, Pantenus shed such glory on the town of Alexandria, that the Bishop Julian charged him with the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures in that famous school.

The renown of Pantenus extended beyond the limits of the Roman Empire; and some Indian merchants, drawn by commerce to Alexandria, before the year 179, took occasion to make themselves acquainted with the holy doctor, the head of the Christian school, and besought him to proceed to their country, in order there to combat the doctrines of the Brahmins by those of Jesus Christ.

There were many holy-minded men at that time to be found, under the name of Evangelists, who, full of zeal for the service of God, were willing, after the example of the apostles, to renounce every worldly prospect, and devote themselves wholly to the propagation of the Christian religion. Pantenus was of this number; and yielding to the entreaties of an envoy, sent to him from India, he gave up his school, and in 189 quitted Egypt, and set out for those remote countries, though not without the permission of the Bishop of Alexandria,

who appointed him preacher of the Gospel to the Oriental nations.*

On arriving in India, Pantenus found indications of the faith having been already preached there; but he again announced Jesus Christ to the Brahmins and philosophers of the country. History, however, gives us no further details concerning his mission, than that he found in the hands of some Christians, a Gospel of St. Matthew in the Hebrew character. It is supposed, that, after having devoted some years to evangelical labours in India, he returned to Alexandria, and recommenced his former occupation. It is certain that he was still living when Origen was filling, with much distinction, the professorial chair, but the precise date of his death is not known. It is commonly thought that he lived till the end of the reign of Severus, or the commencement of that of Caracalla. The Gospel of St. Matthew, which he brought from India to Alexandria, was still in existence in the time of St. Jerome.†

In the early ages of Christianity the ecclesiastical hierarchy was rapidly organised. Wherever there were found a few of the faithful gathered together, the Church of Jesus Christ, full of vigilance and anxiety for their welfare, placed at their head bishops charged to confirm neophytes in the faith, and excite the ardour of proselytism. St. Pantenus had been, it was supposed, before his departure for India, consecrated bishop at Alexandria, by Demetrius.

After the departure of St. Pantenus, the evangelical charge of the extreme East was undertaken by Frumentius, who visited India in company with his brother Adhesius, and his paternal uncle, a native of Tyre, and a man remarkable for his scientific attainments; but on entering a certain port to take in provisions and water, they were attacked suddenly, as soon as they set foot on land, by the natives of the country.

* Eusebius Hist., lib. iv. ch. 10.
† Eusebius, lib. vi. ch. 14.

Many of the travellers perished, and others were dragged into captivity. Among the killed was the uncle of Frumentius; but the two nephews were presented to the king, who, having formed a high opinion of their merit, raised them to the chief dignities of the state. Frumentius resided a long time in India, where for several years he filled the office of first minister, and governor of one of the kings during his minority.

He preached the Gospel in the southern parts of the peninsula, and from his high position, and his speaking remarkably well the language of the country, he exercised great influence over the population, and his mission was crowned with the most brilliant success. After having built several churches, he obtained permission to revisit his native country, where he was consecrated bishop; and returned to India invested with this new dignity.

Christianity was soon so flourishing on the banks of the Ganges, that it was thought necessary to institute a Primacy of India; and the first bishop appointed to this dignity was one named John, who, in 325, was present at the Council of Nice, and put his signature to its acts. In the following year, Frumentius succeeded him in the primacy, and was consecrated at Alexandria by Athanasius. He resided in the peninsula, and from that time the Christians always had a bishop who bore the title of Primate of India.

The religion of Jesus Christ extended rapidly in these vast regions, and even penetrated to the north, notwithstanding all the opposition it had to encounter from the Brahmins, and the disciples of Buddha.

It is well known that Musæus, Bishop of Aduli, on the frontiers of Abyssinia, evangelised the northern parts of India in the second half of the fourth century; being associated in this task with the famous Palladius, a Goth of Galatia.

They embarked with some merchants on the Red Sea, at that time much frequented by vessels from Ceylon and China; but Palladius, whose temperament was not very robust, could

not bear the excessive heat of India, and was obliged to return to his own country. Bishop Musæus, however, pursued his journey, and travelled in Lesser Bucharia and China. These details have been preserved by St. Ambrose, in his book on the customs of the Brahmins, which seems to have been composed for the instruction of this same Palladius, who was for some time the travelling companion of Musæus.

The holy doctor expresses himself thus:—

"The desire of your mind, my dear Palladius, which, filled with the love of wisdom, is always drawn towards the knowledge of new things, has induced us to undertake a new and difficult work, that of describing the life, the manners, and the country of the Brahmins." He then commences his narrative thus:—"Our brother Musæus, Bishop of the Dolenians, has related to me, that having set forth some years ago to visit the Brahmins in India, he travelled over almost the whole country of the Seres (Chinese). After having seen a great number of nations and countries, he arrived at Arianam, near the river Indus."*

At this time the apostle of India was the Bishop Theophilus, who afterwards rendered himself famous by his adherence to the heresy of Arius. He was a native of Diu, at the mouth of the Indus, a dependency of the kingdom of Cambodia, and he was, when very young, sent to Constantinople, where he went through a course of study, and afterwards embraced Christianity and the monastic life.

As he was remarkably dark complexioned, he was called the Black Monk; and subsequently being consecrated bishop, he was sent to Arabia to watch there over the interests of the Christian religion. Notwithstanding the lively opposition which he encountered from the Jews, who were at that time very numerous in that country, he succeeded in building three

* St. Ambrose. "De Moribus Brachmannorum," vol. iv. p. 1131. Œuvres Complètes, Edition de Migne.

churches, one at Darfar, the capital of that part of Arabia; the other at Aden, near the straits of Babelmandel; and the third at the entrance of the Gulf of Persia, where was held a celebrated annual fair, for the sale of Indian and Chinese productions.* After having founded these various churches, he returned to Diu, his native country, and thence visited other parts of India, where he reformed many objectionable practices among the Christians; such, for instance, as that of consulting the pagan oracles, while professing faith in the Gospel.

Unfortunately, Theophilus also sowed the seeds of the Arian heresy amongst these neophytes.†

Martha, a Hindoo by birth, was invested with the Episcopal dignity in his own country towards the end of the fourth century. He held the see of Sufferdam; and St. Chrysostom, in his writings,‡ pronounces an eulogium on this excellent prelate. In 381, he was present at the general council of Constantinople, and at that of Seleucia, where he prepared twenty-one canons. In 383, he was present at the Synod of Sides in Pamphylia.

These facts, which cannot be called in question, are so many proofs, that in the early ages of the Church, the evangelical seed was as fruitful in the East as in the West. The grain of mustard seed had become in India and the surrounding countries a great tree, and numerous populations had found shelter under its branches, which may very probably have extended even to China, since, according to the testimony of St. Ambrose, Bishop Musæus had traversed almost all the country of the Seres.

The Chinese of that time were less indifferent to matters of religion than they have been since, and it is scarcely probable that they should have remained quite uninterested in the great

* Philostorge, vol. ii., No. 6., and 1-3. No. 4.
† Nicephorus Hist. Eccl., vol. i. p. 719.
‡ Saint Chrysost. Epist. 14., and Olympiadem.

Christian movement then going on in the world, since they were in frequent communication with the neophytes of India, Persia, and Arabia; and that, moreover, the propagators of the faith had no difficulty in obtaining entrance into their empire, as it was then open to all foreigners.

This assertion does not appear to us a mere hypothesis; for Arnobius, who lived in the third century, reckons the Chinese among the nations who had already received the Gospel.

At a somewhat later period, namely in 585, under Justinian, the celebrated Egyptian traveller, *Cosmas Indicopleustes* (that is to say, traveller in India), made many journeys in those countries; and he reports, in his work, entitled "Christian Topography," that there were churches and priests, with a complete liturgy, in the island of Ceylon, on the coast of Malabar, and in the north-west of the peninsula of Hindostan.* This is what he says of Ceylon:—"There is in this inland a church for the Christians of Persia, who often go to it. It is served by a priest and a vicar, who took sacred orders in Persia, and it has the complete ecclesiastical liturgy. As for the natives of the island, they, as well as the kings who rule it, are pagans. They have many temples, and amongst others one built on a hill, in which there is a jewel of inestimable value, a ruby of the size of a large fir cone. When the sun shines upon it, its rays are perfectly dazzling. Great numbers of vessels come to this island, especially from India and Ethiopia, as well as from China and other countries to the east; and many ships from Ceylon also proceed to those countries."†

Cosmas Indicopleustes confesses that he does not know‡

* These churches, priests, and liturgies in the north of India at that remote period, form certainly a very striking fact. At the present day it is there that the pomp of the hierarchy and liturgy of Buddhism is chiefly displayed; but at that time it did not exist. If, therefore, there has been any imitation in the case, it is certainly not Christianity that has been the imitator.

† Cosmas Indicopleustes in the "Voyages de Thevenot," p. 20.

‡ Aut ulterius etiam ignoro. "Topographia Christ." vol. iii.

whether there are any Christians beyond Ceylon; but that there were such, even in China, we shall soon find the most convincing proofs.

Whilst the religion of Jesus Christ was being thus diffused over the world, the spirit of evil, incessantly labouring to delude mankind, was endeavouring to mingle error with the truth, and obscure by his darkness the evangelical light. The Christian converts of St. Thomas did not always preserve in its purity the faith which the apostle had preached to them. The Indians had more communication with Egypt and Greece than with the city in which Jesus Christ has established the focus of his truth, and the centre of his Church; and by degrees they began to feel the ill effects of their relations with these unsteady people of the East, over whom the very spirit of schism and heresy seemed to hold sway. Nestorianism had taken firm root in Persia, whose numerous churches were governed by very enlightened, though heretical ecclesiastics, and who, moreover, despatched missionaries of their doctrines to Ceylon, India, and even the Chinese empire, where they greatly corrupted those of true Christianity.

From the monument of Si-gnan-Fou, of which we shall presently speak, some authors have concluded that Christianity was first carried to China by the Nestorians. But this appears to us extremely doubtful; for, leaving out of the question for the moment the opinions of those who have distinctly affirmed that the Chinese were first evangelised by St. Thomas or his disciples, we have the most authentic testimony that the first propagation of the faith in Upper Asia was by orthodox Catholics, untouched by any taint of heresy. Ebedjesus, a Syrian writer, much versed in the Christian antiquities of the East, expresses himself thus in his Canonical Epitome:—"The *Catholicos* Saliba-Zacha founded the metropolitan sees of Heria (in Khorassan), of Samarcand, and of China, though some have affirmed that they were instituted by Achæus and

Silas."* Thus, according to Ebedjesus, many have thought that Achæus and Silas established the metropolitan sees of China. Now Achæus, the Archbishop of Seleucia, was at the head of the orthodox Chaldean Christians, from 411 to 415; Silas was patriarch of the Nestorians from 503 to 520; and Saliba-Zacha held the same see from 714 to 728.

If, therefore, it should be admitted, in contradiction to the opinion of many, that the metropolitan see of China was established by Saliba-Zacha, it only appears more certain that the Chinese must have been converted to Christianity long before the time of this Nestorian patriarch. How, in fact, could a metropolitan see be created in a country, in which Christianity had not made considerable progress, and in which there were not already several episcopal sees? The creation of a metropolitan supposes a flourishing church already established; and this could not be till after a considerable lapse of time. But if we suppose, with the authors referred to by Ebedjesus, that the metropolitan see of China was founded by Achæus, Archbishop of Seleucia, towards the year 411, we are fully justified in giving credit to the tradition which dates the propagation of the Christian faith in China from the time of the Apostles themselves; and it is not surprising that Arnobius, who lived in the third century, should have counted the Seres or Chinese amongst the nations who, in his time, had received the Gospel.

One of the most conclusive arguments, however, which tend to prove the antiquity of Christianity in China, has been furnished by Assemani, in his very erudite work.† This learned Orientalist quotes from Amrus the list of metropolitans subject to the Patriarch of Seleucia, and in this catalogue the metropolitan see of China is reckoned with that of India.‡

It may, therefore, be inferred that the two were established

* "Ebedjesus Sobensis in Epitome Canonum," par. 8. cap. 15.

† Assem. vol. ii. p. 413.

‡ China occupies the thirteenth place, and India the fourteenth.

about the same time, for Ebedjesus says expressly, "The primacy of the sees is determined by the priority of time, in which the patriarchs lived who founded them."* Now the proofs of the antiquity of Christianity in India rest on the most solid foundation. We have seen that the fact of the Apostleship of St. Thomas in Upper Asia is supported by the constant and unvarying tradition of the Church; by the testimony of Greek, Latin, and Syriac writers; by the most ancient liturgies; and by the most authentic archæological monuments;† and the propagation of the Christian faith in China bears an equal character of antiquity, since, according to the catalogue of Amrus, cited in the *Bibliothèque Orientale*, by the learned Assemani, the metropolitan see of China is placed on a level with that of India.

It has seemed to us important to dwell on these proofs of the introduction of Christianity into China during the first ages of the Church, because, if it is demonstrated that the Gospel was known in those countries before the seventh century, the possible authenticity of the monument of Si-gnan-Fou, into which we are now about to inquire, may be admitted *à priori*

* Assem. vol. iii. p. 346. † "Mémoire de M. Reinaud," p. 86.

CHAPTER II.

Discovery of the famous Inscription of Si-gnan-Fou. — Translation of this Inscription. — State of the Chinese Empire at the epoch of the erection of this monument. — Influx of Foreigners into China under the dynasty of Thang. — Critical study of the Inscription of Si-gnan-Fou. — Native Country of Olopen and other Missionaries to China in the seventh century. — Syriac Characters. — Nestorian Doctrine. — Objections of Voltaire and Milne to the authenticity of the Inscription. — Refutation of them. — The authenticity of the Monument proved by Chinese Writers. — Ancient and Modern Books. — Simple Faith of the Missionaries. — Inference.

In 1625, some Chinese workmen, engaged in digging a foundation for a house, outside the walls of the city of Si-gnan-Fou, the capital of the province of Chen-Si, found, buried in the earth, a large monumental stone, resembling those which the Chinese are in the habit of raising to preserve to posterity the remembrance of remarkable events and illustrious men. It was a dark-coloured marble tablet, ten feet high and five broad, and bearing on one side an inscription in ancient Chinese, and also some other characters quite unknown in China. The discovery excited much attention among the mandarins and the population of the country. The stone was publicly exhibited, and visited by crowds of curious persons; and amongst others, some Jesuit missionaries, who were at that time scattered about China, in various missions, went to examine it. The first who saw it was Father Alvares Semedo; then came Martin Martini, author of the Chinese Atlas, and Michael Boym, a Pole, who, with the assistance of a Chinese man of letters, undertook the interpretation of the inscription.

At the news of this curious discovery, the government of

Pekin sent to demand a copy of the inscription, and the Emperor gave orders that the original should be placed in a celebrated pagoda, about a quarter of a league from Si-gnan-Fou, where, doubtless, it may still be found.*

Several exact tracings from the stone were sent to Europe by the Jesuits who saw it. The library of their house at Rome had one of the first, and it attracted numerous visitors; subsequently, another authentic copy, of the dimensions of the tablet, was sent to Paris, and deposited at the library in the Rue Richelieu, where it may still be seen in the Gallery of MSS.

This monument, discovered by chance amidst rubbish, in the environs of an ancient capital of the Chinese Empire, excited a great sensation; for, on examining the stone, and endeavouring to interpret the inscription, it was, with surprise, discovered that the Christian religion had had numerous apostles in China, at the beginning of the seventh century, and that it had for a long time flourished there. The strange characters proved to be those called *estranghélos*, which were in use among the ancient inhabitants of Syria, and will be found in most Syriac manuscripts of earlier date than the eighth century.†

People had been accustomed hitherto to regard China as having been, up to a recent period, kept entirely apart from all contact with the nations of the West; when, in 1583, Father Ricci announced in that country the glad tidings of the Gospel, it was imagined that the name of Jesus was then pronounced for the first time in that sequestered land. No little astonishment, therefore, was created, when a voice from antiquity, issuing thus from the bowels of the earth, proclaimed that Christianity had been preached from the beginning among

* During our residence at Pekin, several Chinese friends assured us that they had seen the inscription in the above-mentioned pagoda.

† It was employed chiefly for inscriptions, and resembled the ancient Arab character called Rufic.

the remotest nations; that even for the Chinese the Dayspring from on high had shone forth; and that if they were still in darkness, it was not because Providence never afforded them an opportunity of seeing the light.

It is stated on the monumental stone in question, that a religious man, named Olopen, a man of eminent virtue, came, in 635, from *Ta-Thsin* (the Roman Empire) to Si-gnan-Fou. The Emperor sent his officers to meet him in the western suburb of the city, had him brought to the palace, and ordered him to translate the sacred books that he had brought with him. These books having been examined, the Emperor pronounced the doctrine they contained good, and permitted its publication. The decree issued to this effect is cited in the inscription. It is therein asserted, to the honour of the doctrine taught by Olopen, that under the dynasty of Tcheou, the law of truth was eclipsed in China, and having been carried towards the West by Lao-Tze, has now returned to its primitive source, to increase the splendour of the reigning dynasty. This doctrine proclaims, that Aloho (that is, God, in the Syriac language) created the heavens and the earth; and that Satan, having seduced the first man, God sent the Messiah to deliver the human race from the original sin; that the Messian was born of a virgin, in the country of Ta-Thsin, and that the Persians went to adore him, in order that the law and the prediction might be accomplished.

The Syriac characters, which form ninety lines, contain the names of the Syrian priests who came to China in the suite of Olopen.

This is a brief summary of the inscription of Si-gnan-Fou; but as it is our purpose to collect all the documents relating to the introduction and propagation of Christianity in High Asia, we will give a complete translation of this curious monument, which, at the epoch of its discovery, excited the most passionate controversies. We trust that our translation will be found as faithful as the extreme conciseness of the Chinese

language will permit. Whilst working at it, we have had before us the Chinese text, preserved in the Imperial Library, and we have been further aided by various translations already made.

The preamble of the inscription is surmounted by the figure of a cross, cut in the stone, resembling that used by the Knights of Malta, and also that found in the tomb of St. Thomas, in India.

Monument of the great propagation of the Luminous Doctrine in the Central Empire composed by Khing-Tsing, a devout man of the temple of Ta-Thsin.

"1. There has always been one only true Cause, essentially the first, and without beginning, supremely intelligent and immaterial; essentially the last, and uniting all perfections. He placed the poles of the heavens, and created all beings; marvellously holy; he is the source of all perfection This admirable being, is he not the *Triune*, the true Lord without beginning, *Oloho?**

"He divided the world by a cross into four parts. After having decomposed the primordial air, he gave birth to the two elements.†

"Chaos was transformed, and then the sun and the moon appeared. He made the sun and the moon move‡ to produce day and night. He elaborated and perfected the ten thousand things§; but in creating the first man, he endowed him with perfect interior harmony. He enjoined him to watch over the sea of his desires. His nature was without vice, and without error; his heart, pure and simple, was originally without disorderly appetites.

"2. But Sa-Than propagated lies, and stained by his malice that which had been pure and holy.‖ He proclaimed, as a truth, the equality of greatness, and upset all ideas. This is why three hundred and sixty-five sects¶, lending each other a mutual support, formed a long chain, and wove, so to speak, a net of law. Some put the creature in the place of the Eternal, others denied the existence of beings, and destroyed the two principles.

* This name, foreign to the Chinese language, is evidently a translation of *Eloha*, the true *name* of God in Syriac.

† The *Yn* and the *Yang*, which play so great a part among Chinese philosophers.

‡ Modern astronomy has shown that it is the movement of the sun, which draws after it that of the earth. It would be curious if this fact were known to the author of the inscription.

§ *Wan-ou*, ten thousand things, is the Chinese expression for the totality of Created beings.

‖ This expression is obscure, but it seems to us that it is meant to indicate the Indian and Chinese pantheism.

¶ This number, which corresponds with the days of the year, expresses, according to the genius of the Chinese language, a great multitude, an uninterrupted series.

Others instituted prayers and sacrifices to obtain good fortune; others proclaimed their own sanctity, to deceive mankind. The minds of men laboured, and where filled with anxiety; aspirations towards the supreme good were trampled down; thus perpetually floating about, they attained to nothing, and all went from bad to worse.* The darkness thickened, men lost their sight, and for a long time they wandered without being able to find it again.

"3. Then our Tri-une God communicated his substance to the venerable *Mi-chi-ho* (Messiah), who, veiling his true majesty, appeared in the world in the likeness of a man. The celestial spirits manifested their joy, and a Virgin brought fourth a Saint in Ta-Thsin. The most splendid constellations announced this happy event; the Persians saw the splendour, and ran to pay tribute. He fulfilled what was said of old by the twenty-four saints†; he organised by his precepts, both families and kingdoms; he instituted the new religion, according to the pure notion of the Trinity in Unity; he regulated conscience by true faith; he signified to the world the eight commandments, and purged humanity from its pollutions, by opening the door to the three virtues. He diffused life and extinguished death; he suspended the luminous sun to destroy the dwelling of darkness, and then the lies of demons passed away. He directed the bark of mercy towards the palace of light, and all creatures endowed with intelligence have been succoured. After having consummated this act of power, he rose at mid-day towards the Truth. Twenty-seven books have been left.‡ He has enlarged the springs of mercy, that men might be converted. The baptism by water and by the Spirit, is a law that purifies the soul, and beautifies the exterior. The sign of the cross unites the four quarters of the world, and restores the harmony that has been destroyed. By striking upon a piece of wood §, we make the voice of charity and mercy resound; by sacrificing towards the East, we indicate the way of life and glory.

"Our ministers allow their beards to grow, to show that they are devoted to their neighbours. The tonsure that they wear at the top of their heads indicates that they have renounced worldly desires. In giving liberty to slaves, we become a link between the powerful and the weak. We do not accumulate riches, and we share with the poor that which we possess. Fasting strengthens the intellectual powers, abstinence and moderation preserve health. We worship seven times a day, and by our prayers we aid the living and the dead. On the seventh day we offer sacrifice, after

* Literally, *the boiled meat turned to roast.*

† An allusion to the four great prophets, and the twelve lesser ones, by adding to whom Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Moses, Samuel, David, and John the Baptist, they make twenty-four.

‡ Namely, the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, fourteen Epistles of St. Paul, three of St. John, one of St. James, two of St. Peter, one of St. Jude, and the Apocalypse.

§ It is customary in China in the pagodas and monasteries to strike either on a bell or a piece of bamboo, to call the devout to prayer.

having purified our hearts, and received absolution for our sins. This religion, so perfect and so excellent, is difficult to name, but it enlightens darkness by its brilliant precepts. It is called the Luminous Religion.*

"5. Learning alone without sanctity has no grandeur; sanctity without learning makes no progress. When learning and sanctity proceed harmoniously, the universe is adorned and resplendent.

"The Emperor Tai-Tsoung† illustrated the empire. He opened the revolution, and governed men in holiness. In his time there was a man of high virtue named Olopen, who came from the kingdom of Ta-Thsin. Directed by the blue clouds, he bore the Scriptures of the true doctrine; he observed the rules of the winds, and traversed difficult and perilous countries.

"In the ninth year of Tching-Kouan (636), he arrived at Tchangnan.‡ The emperor ordered Fang-hi-wen-Ling, first minister of the empire, to go with a great train of attendants to the western suburb, to meet the stranger, and bring him to the palace. He had the Holy scriptures translated in the imperial library. The court listened to the doctrine, meditated on it profoundly, and understood the great unity of truth. A special edict was promulgated for its publication and diffusion.

"In the twelfth year of Tching-Kouan, in the seventh moon during the Autumn, the new edict was promulgated in these terms:—

"'The doctrine has no fixed name, the holy has no determinate substance; it institutes religions suitable to various countries, and carries men in crowds in its track.§ Olopen, a man of *Ta-Thsin*, and of a lofty virtue, bearing Scriptures and images, has come to offer them in the Supreme Court. After a minute examination of the spirit of this religion, it has been found to be excellent, mysterious, and pacific. The contemplation of its radical principle gives birth to perfection, and fixes the will. It is exempt from verbosity; it considers only good results. It is useful to men, and consequently ought to be published under the whole extent of the heavens. I, therefore, command the magistrates to have a Ta-Thsin temple construct-

* *King-Khiao* means, literally, luminous religion. A Russian scholar, who has made a rather inaccurate translation of the above inscription, has rendered these two Chinese characters most erroneously as *orthodox religion*.

† Tai-Tsoung was only twenty-three years of age when he subjugated the empire. He was proclaimed Emperor in 627, and was remarkable for his philosophical toleration, and his numerous relations with foreigners. The reception he gave to Olopen is, therefore, not at all surprising. In 629, he had subjugated all the Tartar kings, who, with common consent conferred on him the title of Celestial Emperor. He died, A. D. 649, at the age of 45, after having reigned 22 years.

‡ The name borne at that time by Si-ngan-Fou, at present capital of the province of Chen-Si. It was at that time the capital of the empire, and the residence of the court.

§ These words show clearly that the Emperor Tai-Tsoung tolerated all religions, and was consequently likely to give a favourable reception to the Christian.

ed in the quarter named I-ning* of the imperial city, and twenty-one religious men shall be installed therein.'

"The virtue of the venerable dynasty of Tcheou was extinct; the *Blue Chariot* had passed to the West.† The wisdom of the dynasty of Thang having shone forth, a luminous ray has penetrated into the East. The magistrates have received orders, and a genuine writing of the sovereign has been traced on the wall of the temple. A Celestial beauty, with splendid colours, has made the Luminous Gate‡ to shine. This sacred testimony of the Emperor has been a source of felicity; it will eternally lighten the universe.

"6. According to the geographical monuments of the Western countries, and the historiographers of the dynasties Han and Wei, the kingdom of Ta-Thsin embraces on the south the Sea of Coral§; on the north it is bounded by mountains of precious stones; to the west it looks to the country of the Immortals, and the Forest of Flowers; towards the east it receives the perpetual winds, and sweet waters. Its soil produces the linen that is washed with fire (Asbestos), vivifying perfumes, carbuncles, and the precious stones that shine in the night. Its people practice neither theft nor assassinations; they enjoy a happy peace. If a law is not *luminous* (Christian), it is not observed. No one is ever called to power who is not virtuous. The country is of vast extent, and articles of luxury are seen in every part of it.

"7. The great Emperor Kao-Tsoung ‖ followed respectfully in the footsteps of his ancestors. He fertilised the Truth, conferred splendour on it, and raised *luminous* temples in all the provinces. He heaped new titles on Olopen, and appointed him Guardian of the Empire, and Lord of the Great Law. The law was thus propagated along the Ten Roads.¶ The empire thus received fruitful germs of felicity; the temples filled a hundred cities, and the families were enriched with admirable happiness.

"8. In the years Chen-Li ** the children of *Che* (the Buddhists) resorted to violence and spread their calumnies, even as far as the Eastern Tcheou

* That is to say, the quarter "of Justice and Mercy."

† Lao-Kiun, or Lao-tse, a celebrated Chinese philosopher, the contemporary of Confucius, and author of "the Tao-Te-King,"—the book of Virtue and Reason,—translated into French by M. Stanislas Julien. He was the founder of the sect of Doctors of Reasons. (See "Chinese Empire," ch. xi.)

‡ *Men* (gate) is often used in Chinese to designate a religion. Thus, *King-Men*, the Luminous Gate, is the synomyme of Luminous Religion, and in the monument of Si-ngan-Fou is used for Christianity.

§ Probably the Red Sea.

‖ He succeeded his father Tai-Tsoung, in 650. History has reproached him with feebleness of character, and with having allowed his wife, the famous Ou-Heou, to govern him.

¶ In 627, Tai-Tsoung divided the empire into ten provinces, which he named *Tao*, or Way.

** Those of the reign of the famous Empress Ou-Heou, who filled the imperial throne for forty years. The life of this monstrous woman, though she was remarkable for

Towards the end of the year Sien-Tien (713), some men of letters of a low class, dared to spread their jests and sarcasms (against religion) in Western Hao.

"At this time Jo-han (John), the chief of the devout men Ki-Li, a person of great virtue, and Kouei-Siou of Kin-Fan, all illustrious religious men, united their efforts to restore the fallen law, and reunite the broken ties. Then Tsoung, an emperor of sublime wisdom, ordered the five kings, Ning-Kouo, to repair to the temple of felicity, and firmly raise its altar. The beam of the law, which had been bent, was again straightened, and the stone of the doctrine was removed to the perpendicular.

"At the commencement of the years Tien-Pao, (747), he ordered Kao-Ly-Siu, the generalissimo of his armies, to take the venerable images of the five saints, place them in the temple, and offer a hundred pieces of silk as a sign of joy and gladness. Thus we were able to seize the bow, the sword, and the moustaches of the Dragon*, although he was far off. The beams of the sun shed a great light on their celestial countenances.

"10. In the third year of Tching-Kouan (744), there was a religious man of the Kingdom of Ta-Thsin named Ki-Ho, who, directing his course by the stars, travelled for the conversion of men. Having contemplated the sun he came to render homage to the emperor.

"The emperor ordered the devout Lo-hou, the devout Pou-Loung, and others, to the number of seven, to devote themselves, along with the virtuous Ki-Ho, to the practice of perfection in the temple of Hing-Khing. Then the celestial emperor himself wrote a tablet for the temple. The writing of the Dragon appeared on the front, gorgeous ornaments glittered on every part, vermilion clouds shone from afar, they rose, and rivalled in splendour those of the sun. The imperial favours are like the summits of the southern mountains, they equal in depth the Eastern Ocean.

"Reason can do all things; that which is possible can be named; the saint does everything, and what he does may be made public.

"Sou-Tsoung, the illustrious and brilliant emperor, erected at Ling-ou and other towns, five in all, *luminous* temples. The primitive good was thus strengthened, and felicity flourished. Joyous solemnities were inaugurated, and the empire entered on a wide course of prosperity.

"11. Tai-Tsoung (764), a lettered and a warlike emperor, propagated the holy revolution. He sought for peace and tranquillity. Every year, at the hour of the Nativity (Christmas), he burnt celestial perfumes in remem-

ability and genius, was stained by the most unheard-of cruelty and debauchery. It is not, therefore surprising that in her reign the Christians were persecuted.

* This is an allusion to a Chinese fable, according to which the Emperor Hoang ti was carried to Heaven, along with seventy other persons by a great Dragon. Those who were only able to catch at his moustaches, were shaken off and thrown back on the ground. It is still the custom, when an emperor dies, to say the Dragon has ascended to Heaven.

brance of the divine benefit; he prepared imperial feasts, to honour the *luminous* (Christian) multitude.

"Heaven is certainly the source of whatever is fine and useful. It can then create and preserve all things. The saint, by assimilating this celestial virtue to himself, may then elevate and sanctify the nations.

"12. Our emperor, the friend of moderation, a holy man and a seer, a man of letters and a warrior, has proclaimed eight ordonnances, in order to bring virtuous men into office, and drive away the wicked. He has instituted nine rules for the propagation of the doctrine. Thus, mysterious reason is regenerating the empire; let us pray the Lord for him without blushing. He has attained, too, to the summit of power, and he is always indulgent, the friend of peace, and full of mercy. He is helpful to all, scattering his liberalities among the multitude. Such is the true way, such is the ladder of the holy doctrine. If the rains and the winds arrive in due time, if the sky is calm and serene, if men are well governed, and the affairs of the empire in good condition, if the living enjoy abundance, and the dead sweet repose, if success accompanies our enterprises, as voice does persuasion, if our thoughts are pure, and our actions holy, all that is due to the merit and the practice of our luminous power.

"13. The devout Y-Sou, sub-governor of the province of So-Fan, and inspector of the interior of the palace, has been honoured with a blue tunic. He is charitable and peaceful, desirous of doing good to his neighbour, and a zealous propagator of the law. He came from very far off, from Wang-che-Tchen, to Tchoung-hin; he surpasses three generations by his virtues, he has acquired perfection in the arts and sciences; in the beginning, he filled an office in the vermilion palace.*

"Kouo-tso,† first minister of state, governor of the town of Fen-Yang, was at first charged with military affairs in Lo-Fan. The emperor Sou-Tsoung wished that he should accompany him in a distant expedition, and though he was admitted familiarly into the imperial tent, he behaved as if he had been nothing more than a simple soldier. He was, nevertheless, the teeth and the claws of the empire, the eyes and the ears of the army. He distributed to others his pay and his presents, and did not know how to accumulate riches in his house. He offered vases of glass, and gilded carpets; he restored the ancient temples, and enlarged the Palace of the Law. He

* The Imperial court.

† Kouo-tso was the most illustrious man of the dynasty of Thang, either in affairs of peace or war. He several times replaced on their throne emperors who had been driven from it by foreigners or rebels. He died at the age of eighty-four, in 781, the very year when this monument was erected. The whole empire, say the annals, went into mourning for his death, and this mourning was the same as that worn for a parent, and lasted three years. His name has remained popular in China till this day; he is often made the hero of dramatic pieces, and we have ourselves repeatedly heard his name pronounced with respect and admiration in assemblies of mandarins. There is every reason to believe that this great man was a Christian.

raised roofs and porticoes, and embellished edifices in such a manner that they were like pheasants spreading their wings to fly. He rendered perpetual service to the Luminous Gate;* he distributed alms generously; every year he assembled the religious and faithful from the four temples; he served them with zeal, he provided them with suitable dishes, and he continued his good offices for fifty days; those who were hungry came, and he fed them; those who were cold came, and he clothed them; he took care of the sick, and cured them; he buried the dead, and put them to rest. It has not been heard that there existed anything finer among the Ta-So,† of pure duty. The religious men of the Luminous Doctrine, clothed in their white robes, admired this illustrious man, and wished to engrave on stone the memorial of his sublime actions.

"15. The monument expresses itself thus:—The true Lord is without beginning, eternally pure, and solitary. He was the Maker and reformer of the whole world; he fixed the earth and prepared the heavens. He came into the world to effect an infinite salvation. He ascended like the sun, and darkness was dispersed; he has made visible the mysterious depths of truth.

"16. The illustrious and learned emperor, who has surpassed in wisdom the ancient monarchs, has known how to profit by the favourable time, and pacify that which was disturbed. He has expanded the heavens, and dilated the earth. The luminous religion entered the empire under the dynasty of Thang. The sacred books were translated, temples were built, and the living and the dead were passed in the book. A hundred felicities arose at the same time, and ten thousand kingdoms were pacified.

"17. Kao-Tsoung‡ continued his race; the roofs of the pure edifices arose again; the temples of Concord cast a glory which illuminated the country of the centre. The true law was clearly made known. The chiefs of the doctrine were instituted; mortals again found peace and happiness, and there were no more miseries and calamities.

"18. Hiuen-Houng inaugurated the ways of sanctity and rectitude. He made the imperial tables shine in the front of the temple; the celestial inscription beamed with marvellous glory; the august tablet was perfectly dazzling, the people paid homage to it. The empire was at peace, and men lived in felicity.

"19. Lou-Tsoung, having recovered the empire, returned into the imperial city, after having directed from afar his august chariot. The sun displayed its splendour, and a fortunate wind swept away the night; then felicity returned into the palace, the monstrous vapour of revolt was dis-

* The Christian religion.

† According to tradition, Ta-so was a religious Buddhist, who having convoked all the Bonzes in a great assembly, lodged them, fed them and procured for them all the necessaries of life.—Alvarez Semedo, Histoire Générale de Chine," p. 229.

‡ The author of the inscription enumerates the emperors who up to this period had favoured Christianity.

sipated for ever. He had arrested its ebullition and its dust; thus our country became great.

"20. Tai-Tsoung, the Pious and the Just, equalled by his virtue both heaven and earth. He forwarded what he had begun, and perfected what he forwarded; he knew how to obtain in all things marvellous advantages. He burnt perfumes in acts of thanksgiving; his liberalities were scattered about everywhere. The vallies of the East* came to render him homage; the rents in the moon were repaired.†

"21. Kien-Tchoung,‡ master of his passions, rendered virtue beautiful and brilliant. By his arms he pacified the four seas; he organised and civilised ten thousand countries; he penetrated like a torch the hidden miseries of men; he reflected like a mirror the colours of all things; he resuscitated and revived the world; he gave laws to a hundred barbarian nations. The most excellent law is assuredly in harmony with all perfections. If we are forced to name it, we shall call it the Triple Unity. The sovereign acts, and the subject publishes his actions; and that is why we erect this monument, to celebrate the primordial felicity.

"This stone was raised in the second year of Kien-Tchoung, of the great dynasty of Thang (A. D. 781.), on the seventh day of the moon of the great increase.§ At this time the devout Ning-Chou, lord of the doctrine,‖ governed the luminous multitude in the Eastern country.

"Lu-Siou-Yen, councillor of the palace, and previously member of the Council of War, himself traced these characters."

Such is the translation of the famous inscription found at Si-ngan-Fou in 1625. On the left of the monument are to be read the following words, in the Syriac language. "In the days of the Father of Fathers, Anan-Yeschouah, Patriarch *Catholicos.*¶ To the right could be traced, "Adam, Priest, and Chor-Episcopus;" and at the base of the inscription, "In the year of the Greeks one thousand nine hundred and two (A. D. 781) Mar Yezd-bouzid, Priest, and Chor-Episcopus of the Imperial City of Komdam, son of Millesius, priest, of happy memory, of Balkh, a town of Tokharistan (Turkestan), raised this tablet of stone, on which are described the benefits

* The barbarians of the East.

† Perhaps this means that the empire was restored to tranquillity.

‡ The emperor Te-Soung, who reigned under the title of Kien-Tchoung.

§ The first moon. ‖ Bishop.

¶ He was the second patriarch of that name, and consecrated in 774. His death, which took place in 778, was not known in China when the stone was erected.

of our Saviour, and the preaching of our fathers in the kingdom of the Chinese. Adam, Deacon, son of Yezd-bouzid, Chor-Episcopus; Mar-Sergius, Priest, and Chor-Episcopus; Sabar-Jesu, Priest; Gabriel, Priest, Arch-deacon, and Ecclesiarch of Komdam and Sarage."

At the period mentioned in the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou, China had recently undergone an important revolution, which brought into power the dynasty of Thang, the most celebrated and most illustrious of those which have governed the Chinese empire.

The founder, Tai-Tsoung, although scarcely twenty-three years of age, had subjugated almost all the provinces; but instead of seizing on the supreme power for himself, he caused his father to be proclaimed emperor. This act of filial piety won for him the enthusiastic admiration of the people; and when, in 627, he succeeded to the imperial throne, he became one of the greatest princes of the Chinese monarchy. He annexed to the empire, or rendered tributary, all the neighbouring States. In 629, the whole of Tartary was subject to his authority, and the chiefs unanimously yielded to him the title of Celestial Emperor. He died in the year 649, at the age of fifty-five, after having reigned twenty-three years.

The dynasty of Thang produced a numerous succession of distinguished princes, who raised China to the highest point of civilisation it has ever reached. At no other period did literature and the fine arts attain an equal degree of splendour; and even to the present day, the antiquaries of China, and those of Europe, seek with eagerness, and at a great expense, the porcelain, the bronzes, the lacquer, and the paintings of the dynasty of Thang.

This period of the history of China is especially remarkable for the numerous relations which the Chinese kept up with foreign countries. Accustomed as we have been, in our own time, to see the Chinese shutting themselves up jealously within their own empire, we have been too ready to believe

that it was always so; that they have always cherished an inveterate antipathy to foreigners, and done their utmost to keep them off their frontiers. This is, however, quite a mistake. This jealously exclusive spirit characterises especially the Mantchoo Tartars; and the empire has only been thus hermetically closed since their accession to power.

In the preceding ages, and particularly under the celebrated dynasty of Thang, the Chinese kept up an active intercourse with all the Asiatic nations. Arabs, Persians, and Indians, came and traded in their ports, without let or hindrance; and also freely passed into the interior, and traversed the provinces.

The annals of China, as well as the histories of the various countries of Asia alluded to, contain numerous documents relating to this subject.

We learn from one of these, that the relations of Persia and China were, at this time, very remarkable; and that Hormisdas or Izdegerd III. was the ally of the Emperor of China. In 644, the Caliph Omar was stabbed in the Mosque of Medina, and his successor had achieved, at the head of the Mussulman armies, the conquest of Persia, when Hormisdas, reduced to the last extremity, sent to China, to solicit the aid of an emperor of the Thang dynasty. After the death of Hormisdas, and the definite conquest of Persia, Peroses, his son, succeeded in making his escape to China, where he was recognised as King of Persia, and did homage to the emperor for the dominions which he never possessed. The emperor appointed him to the office of captain of his guard, and allowed the title afterwards to descend to his son, whom the Chinese pretended to wish to re-establish in his kingdom. They even sent him off with an army; but their real design was to surprise the people of Thibet, by which country they were to pass. This stratagem having succeeded, their general brought back the Persian prince, who died at Si-ngan-Fou, without leaving any descendants.

At this time, the Greek emperor sent an embassy to the Emperor of China, to endeavor to excite his hostility against the Arabs. The disciples of Manes and Zoroastor had spread in upper Asia, and had obtained permission to build temples in China, as we shall see in the sequel, even according to the testimony of Chinese writers. It is, therefore, the more easily to be believed that the founders of the dynasty of Thang, who held such frequent communication with foreign powers, may have permitted the Christians, as well as others, to establish themselves in the empire.

The monument of Si-ngan-Fou affords incontestible proof that they did so, for the doctrines whose propagation in China it records can be those only of Christianity.

The inscription is, in the first place, as we have said, surmounted by a cross; then it contains a concise, and tolerably clear exposition of Christian doctrine. The existence of God in three persons, the Creator of all things, and this God named O-lo-ho, a transcription of Eloha, the Syriac name for God, indentical in fact with the Hebrew words Elohah, Elohim; in the succeeding columns an account of the creation of the world, the fall of man, through the seductions of *Satan*, and the subsequent general corruption of the human race; the coming of Jesus Christ, expressed in terms which indicate the Nestorian opinions on the mystery of the Incarnation.

After having given this dogmatic exposition, too, the inscription speaks of the arrival of the missionaries, their protection by the emperor, the progress of the Gospel, and the persecutions which the neophytes had to suffer.

Such, then, is the early history of the propagation of the faith in China, and the brief outline of Christian doctrine contained in the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou. It must have been a striking circumstance certainly, to see a stone thus issuing unexpectedly from the bowels of the earth, in the midst of this ancient empire, to bear witness to the articles of the ancient Catholic faith—the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Re-

demption, Grace, original Sin, Baptism, the sacrifice of the Mass, and even down to the tonsure of priests.

But who then were these devout men—these missionaries scattered over the face of the vast empire of China? What is the distant country named in the inscription as *Ta-Thsin*, whence Olopen and his successors set out to evangelise the innumerable disciples of Lao-tse, Buddha, and Confucius? These questions do not now seem quite as difficult to solve as they were at the time of the discovery of the monument. Many have supposed Ta-Thsin to be the Roman empire in general; others, that it specially designated Judea; and some have even thought it might mean Persia, since most Chinese writers, both ancient and modern, are apt to confound Ta-Thsin with Po-sse, evidently a transcription of the word Persia. The denomination of Ta-Thsin appears, by the evidence of some Chinese books, to correspond with the western part of Asia, which was subject to the great empire of Byzantium, and has always been called Romania by Asiatics. Thus Ta-Thsin may mean either the Roman empire of Byzantium, or Judea, or Persia, or it may be a general appellation for all the countries of the West, just as at the present day the Chinese apply the word *Si-yang*, which signifies *Western Seas*, to the country of all the nations of Europe—English, French, Spaniards, and even sometimes also to that of the Americans.

It is hardly worth while to seek in Chinese authors for a geographical accuracy, which they do not even pretend to themselves.

The authenticity of the monument of Si-gnan-Fou does not in the least depend on the question of what particular country is meant by Ta-Thsin. If it should be Persia, as appears to be indicated in a Chinese work, called, "A History of the Barbarous nations," the Syriac character of the inscription is accounted for. Here is an extract from this production:—"The kingdom of Ta-Thsin is the rendezvous of all the kingdoms of the Western sky, and there meet the foreign mer

chants of the country of the Ta-chi (Arabs). The present king is named Malo-Fo. He envelopes his head *in a piece of silk stuff*, ornamented with letters of gold in relief. His palace is surrounded by walls, in which are seven gates, each guarded by thirty men. When an envoy arrives from another kingdom to offer tribute to this monarch, he prostrates himself at the foot of the steps, utters his prayer, and retires."

"The men of this country are tall, handsome, and intelligent, and as they much resemble the inhabitants of the Central Kingdom, they have been called *Ta-Thsin*, that is, as if one said, 'tall Chinese.'"

"The people of this kingdom seldom see the face of their king. When he goes out he is mounted on horseback, and over his head, and over his horse, are held parasols, ornamented with gold, pearls, and diamonds. Every year, the king of the kingdom of the Ta-chi (Arabs), who bears the title of Sou-tan (Sultan), sends ambassadors to offer him tribute. If any disturbance takes place in the kingdom, he orders the Ta-chi to arm themselves with lances and cuirasses, and restore tranquillity. Their food is principally composed of cakes of rice and meat. They do not drink wine, but they eat out of vessels of gold and silver, and make use of spoons. After their meals, they pour water into a golden basin to wash their hands."

"This country produces lapis-lazuli, coral, silk stuffs, ornamented with golden flowers, red cornelian, pearls, rhinoceroses, &c."*

The Syriac language, says M. Ernest Renan,† was at that time, (the 5th century) the ecclesiastical language of the Persian Christians, as indeed it still is. Bahram the Fifth, yielding no doubt to the pressure of public opinion, and the

* Extract from a work entitled "Tchou-Fan-Tchi," "History of the Barbarous Nations," by Tchao-Jou-Kouo, who lived under the dynasty of Song, between 960-1278. Bibliothèque Imperiale nouv. fonds. Chinois, No. 696.

† Histoire Générale des Langues Semitiques: Paris, 1855, p. 264.

solicitations of the Magi, instituted a violent persecution of Christianity, proscribed the Syriac, and ordered that the Parsee alone should be spoken at Court, and taught in the schools.

This re-action, however, was not final,* the Magi not being at that time strong enough to resist the combined influence of Syria and the Greek Empire, acting in the interests of Christianity. Under Firouz, the Nestorians of Syria made great progress, and under Chosroes, we see the Sassanide Empire becoming the centre of a vast intellectual movement, directed by Greeks and Syrians. Great numbers of the men of Iran came to be instructed at Edessa, and it was this which procured for it the appellation of the School of the Persians. The instruction of the academies of Nisibius and Gandisapor was Greek as to its plan, but the lessons were given in Syriac, and Syriac became in Persia the language of learning, conjointly with Greek. A century afterwards, Persia, by the Mahometan conquest, fell definitively under the influence of the Semitic spirit, and only escaped from it towards the eleventh century, by the establishment of the native dynasties.

Armenia felt the influence of Syria even more completely than Persia, during the ages that intervened between the foundation of Christianity and the Mussulman invasion. There, as in Persia, the Syriac language represented the Christian influence, and was regarded for a long time as sacred. The Armenian translation of the Bible, and the principal ecclesiastical works, were at first written in Syriac.

The spirit of proselytism that actuated the Nestorians, and the persecution that drove them to Upper Asia, spread still further the influence of the Syriac language, and carried it to Tartary, Thibet, India, and even China. The navigation of the

* Ibn-Makaffa reckons the Syriac among the languages that were spoken at Court. See Quatremere, "Mémoire sur les Nabatiens."

Indian Ocean, and the colonisation of India, were in the time of the Ptolemies almost monopolised by the Arabs and Syrians, and an unceasing current of emigration bore the Semitic dialects to the coasts of Hindostan; and there exists at the present day a Christian community in India (perhaps the same which Cosmas-Indicopleustes saw in the sixth century), which has preserved in its liturgy the use of Syriac.*

"It will be seen," says M. Renan,† "what an important part the Syriac language played in Asia, from the third to the ninth century of our era, after it had become the instrument of Christian preaching. Like the Greek for the Hellenic East, and Latin for the West, Syriac became the Christian and ecclesiastical language of Upper Asia."

We may then affirm, without fear of mistake, that the Christian missionaries, whose names are cited in the Chinese text of the inscription, and on the side columns in Syriac characters, belonged to the Church of Syria, which, as is known, was one of the first founded by the Apostles. The Syriac characters in question perfectly resemble the *estranghélo*, used by the Syrians in the eighth century. The names are well known, and have always been employed by the hierarchy of the Syrian church. It may easily be supposed, also, that the neophytes received the Syriac from their masters as a sacred language, and that it was in use among them for the celebration of the divine services, for psalmody, and for drawing up ecclesiastical documents.‡ This is the more probable, as the same custom existed in India, among the Christian converts, supposed to be those of St. Thomas.

* Quatremere, "Mémoire sur les Nabatiens," p. 140.

† "Histoire Générale des Langues Sémitiques."

‡ Many learned Orientalists, among others M. M. Quatremere, Abel Remusat, Klaproth, Reinaud, and Ernest Renan, have supposed that the *Ouigour* alphabet, from which the Mongol, Kalmuck and Mantchoo alphabets are derived, came from the Syriac *estranghélo*, through the intervention of the Nestorians. See Quatremere, "Mém. sur les Nabat.," p. 144; Abel Remusat, "Recherches sur les Langues Tartares," vol. I. p. 29; Klaproth, "Recherches sur la Langue et l'Ecriture des Ouigours;" Reinaud, "Geog. d'Aboulfeda," Introd. p. 362; E. Renan, "Hist. Gén. des Langues Sémitiques," p. 268.

The abridgment of Christian Doctrine given in the Syro-Chinese inscription of Si-ngan-Fou shows us, also, that the propagators of the faith in upper Asia in the seventh century professed the Nestorian errors.*

Through the vague and obscure verbiage which characterises the Chinese style, we recognise the mode in which that heresiarch admitted the union of the Word with Man, by indwelling plenitude of grace superior to that of all the saints. One of the three persons of the Trinity communicated himself to the very illustrious and very venerable Messiah, "veiling his majesty." That is certainly the doctrine of Nestorius; upon that point the authority of the critics is unanimous.

History, as we have elsewhere remarked, records the rapid progress of the Nestorian sects in the interior of Asia, and their being able to hold their ground, even under the sway of the Mussulmans, by means of tributes, compromises, and concessions of every kind.

Setting out from the banks of the Tigris or the Euphrates, these ardent and courageous propagators of the gospel probably proceeded to Khorassan, and then, crossing the Oxus, directed their course towards the Lake of Lop, and entered the Chinese Empire by the province of Chen-si. Olopen and his successors in the Chinese mission, whether Syrians or Persians by birth, certainly belonged to the Nestorian church. O-lo-pen is doubtles a Syriac name, mutilated by Chinese Orthography. De Guignes traced in the two first syllables, the Syrian name for God, Aloho, and the learned Maronite Assemani tried to bring it back by metathesis to the form of Yaballah, or Yabh-Aloho, that is to say, "God given." Six

* The heresy of Nestorius, which spread in the fifth century of our era, consisted principally in the dogma, that there were two persons in Jesus Christ; one, Jesus the Man, brought forth by the Virgin, the other, proceeding from the word of God; and that the Incarnation was not the hypostatic union of the Divine Word with the human nature, but the simple indwelling of the Word in the Man, as in a temple. The Jacobites admitted only one person, but without mixture of the divine and human nature. The orthodox Christians were called Greeks or Melkites.

centuries later, we shall find a Nestorian metropolitan of China bearing the same name. "One cannot imagine," says Abel Remusat,* "of what Voltaire was thinking, when he said that this name resembled an ancient Spanish one. He cannot tell either," he says, "what is to be understood by Olopen coming to China, conducted by the blue clouds, and by observing the rule of the winds; but these expressions, oddly as they sound in a translation, are quite ordinary ones in China.

Voltaire, in fact, had determined to make it out that the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou was nothing but a "pious fraud" of the Jesuits to deceive the Chinese, and persuade them that Christianity had been already received by their ancestors; and the philosophical party in France, out of love for Voltaire, and hatred of the Jesuits, also contested the authenticity of the inscription. Now, however, this question is definitely settled, for men of profound erudition and perfect candour have decided in its favour, and Abel Remusat has argued against the objections raised by Voltaire and some Protestant writers, more especially those of a Mr. Milne, the founder of a Mission at Malacca, who, in a paper published in 1820, endeavoured to insinuate doubts as to the genuineness of the monument in question. "Two remarks," says Mr. Milne, "occur to me in relation to the historians of China; the first, that no authentic Chinese report that I have ever seen makes the least mention of this sect, and that, with the exception of the stone of Si-ngan-Fou, of which *some* missionaries from Rome have spoken, I have never seen or heard that Chinese writers are aware of the existence of any monument, any inscription, or of the remains of any ancient Church; the second is, that no part of the Nestorian doctrines or ceremonies is found mingled with the pagan systems of China, at least as far as I have been able to discover."

There is no need of any long discussion to show that these

* Nouv. mel. Asiat., vol. ii. p. 192.

two remarks, and the inference that might be drawn from them, are equally without foundation. There would, in the first place, be nothing very surprising in the fact, that two religious sects, foreign to one another in their language, origin, and in the nature of their doctrines, should have borrowed nothing from each other for several centuries, during which they might possibly have come into contact, somewhere on the soil of the enormous empire of China. We do not see that the Chinese have ever borrowed anything of the Mussulmans, who have been living in the midst of them almost since the epoch of the Hegira. But those who are intimately acquainted with the religion of the Lamas, cannot help perceiving that their hierarchical system, a great number of their liturgical practices, and many of their dogmas, have been introduced into Buddhism, by a result of the decay and corruption of Nestorian Christianity in Upper Asia; and a zealous Protestant writer, Sir John Davis (formerly governor of the English colony in China), and whose authority Mr. Milne will certainly not dispute, expresses himself thus on the subject of the imitation by Buddhism of Christianity*:—

"The curious resemblance existing between the rites of the Buddhist priests of China and Tartary, and those of the Catholic Church, has excited great surprise among Catholic missionaries. These curious coincidences afford ground for the conjecture that the Chinese did formerly obtain some slight knowledge of Christianity by way of Tartary, and through the intervention of the Nestorians.

"It is certain, and may be seen every day at Canton, that they observe the practices of fasting, of celibacy, and of prayer for the dead. They worship relics, use holy water, and have rosaries of beads with which they count their prayers, and a monastic habit, resembling that of the Franciscans." Here then it seems are many resemblances, which Mr.

* "China," by Sir John Davis, vol. ii. p. 87.

Milne *has not been able to discover*, although they were evident enough to his compatriot and co-religionist, Sir J. Davis. Voltaire, who did not like to trouble himself with scientific arguments, and who was much stronger in sarcasm than in erudition, roundly accuses the missionaries of having fabricated the inscription on the monument of Si-ngan-Fou, from motives of "pious fraud." "As if," observes Abel Remusat,* "such a fabrication could have been practicable in the midst of a distrustful and suspicious nation, in a country in which magistrates and private people are equally ill-disposed towards foreigners, and especially missionaries; where all eyes are open to their most trivial proceedings, and where the authorities watch, with the most jealous care, over everything relating to the historical traditions and monuments of antiquity. It would be very difficult to explain how the missionaries could have been bold enough to have printed and published in China, and in Chinese, an inscription that had never existed; how they could have imitated the Chinese style, counterfeited the manner of the writers of the dynasty of Thang, alluded to customs little known, to local circumstances, to dates calculated from the mysterious figures of Chinese astrology, and the whole without betraying themselves for a moment; and with such perfection as to impose on the most skilful men of letters, induced, of course, by the singularity of the discovery to dispute its authenticity. It could only have been done by one of the most erudite of Chinese scholars, joining with the missionaries to impose on his own countrymen.

"Even that would not be all, for the borders of the inscription are covered with Syrian names in fine *estranghélo* characters. The forgers must then have been not only acquainted with these characters, but have been able to get engraved with perfect exactness ninety lines of them, and in the ancient writing, known at present to very few."

* Melanges "Asiatiques," vol. ii. p. 85.

"This argument of Remusat's," says another learned Orientalist, M. Felix Neve,* "is of irresistible force, and we have formerly heard a similar one maintained with the greatest confidence by M. Quatremere, of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres, and we allow ourselves to quote the opinion of so highly qualified a judge upon this point. Before the last century it would have been absolutely impossible to forge in Europe a series of names and titles belonging to a Christian nation of Western Asia; it is only since the fruits of Assemani's labours have been made public by his family at Rome, that there has existed a sufficient knowledge of the Syriac for such a purpose; and it is only by the publication of the manuscripts of the Vatican, that the extent to which Nestorianism spread in the centre of Asia, and the influence of its hierarchy in the Persian provinces, could have been estimated. There is no reason to suppose that missionaries who left Europe in the very beginning of the seventeenth century could have acquired a knowledge which could only be obtained from reading the originals, and not vague accounts of them."

The sagacity of M. Saint Martin, who was for a long time the colleague of M. Quatremere, has pointed out, in a note worthy of his erudition, another special proof, which is by no means to be neglected.†

"Amongst the various arguments," he says, "that might be urged in favour of the legitimacy of the monument, but of which, as yet, no use has been made, must not be forgotten, the name of the priest by whom it is said to have been erected. This name *Yezdbouzid* is Persian, and at the epoch when the monument was discovered, it would have been impossible to invent it, as there existed no work where it could have been found. Indeed, I do not think that even since then, there has ever been any one published in which it could have been met with.

* "Revue Catholique de Louvain," Nov. 1846.

† "Hist. du bas Empire," vol. vi. p. 69. (ed. de S. M. 1827).

"It is a very celebrated name among the Armenians, and comes to them from a martyr, a Persian by birth, and of the royal race, who perished towards the middle of the seventh century, and rendered his name illustrious amongst the Christian nations of the East." Saint Martin adds in the same place, that the famous monument of Si-ngan-Fou, whose authenticity has for a long time been called in question, from the hatred entertained against the Jesuit missionaries who discovered it, rather than from a candid examination of its contents,—is now regarded as above all suspicion.

Why, in fact, should there have been any such suspicions, and with what possible object could the missionaries have taken on themselves the guilt of the odious stratagem, which Voltaire attributes to them? Their intention, it will probably be said, was to obtain an argument in favour of the Catholic doctrine, or at least to give the Chinese a proof of the antiquity of Christianity in China; for there is no other motive conceivable, which could have induced them to run the risks of so perilous an enterprise. Now the monument of Si-ngan-Fou contains the exposition, not of an orthodox Catholic, but of a Nestorian doctrine. If they had set themselves to work at such a fraud as this, they certainly would not have been so awkward as to leave on this monument traces of a heresy that might occasion them great embarrassment, by compelling them to disclose to the Chinese that there had been among Christians, at an early period, very serious differences on points of doctrine as fundamental to Christianity, as the mystery of the Incarnation; and any one must know little indeed of the Chinese to suppose that such a fact as the discovery of this monument could make any great impression upon them. Events dating no further back than eight centuries would not be of any great weight in the opinion of men, who are fond of deriving their faith and their traditions from the remotest possible periods, and who admire and venerate in Confucius him-

self, only the restorer of antiquity, and of the doctrines of the founders of their ancient monarchy.

Voltaire knew his own epoch and his own country rather better than he did China, and his decisive argument against the inscription is this: "The Jesuits have made us acquainted with it, therefore it is false." But this mode of reasoning, though not without its value in France at that time, will hardly, it is to be hoped, be esteemed very cogent at present. We may have no great affection for the Jesuits, and yet not be willing to subscribe to mere absurdities in order to throw blame on them.

The only serious difficulty in the case of the monument of Si-ngan-Fou, consists in the alleged absolute silence of Chinese writers on the subject. This silence indeed, if it really existed, could never afford more than a negative proof, and must be of little importance to those who are aware of the profound disdain of Chinese historians for foreign nations and "barbarians." But this supposed silence does not really exist. Chinese books do actually contain a great number of valuable hints concerning the propagation of Christianity in China in general, and the monument of Si-ngan-Fou in particular.

M. Stanislas Julien, who has a profound knowledge of Chinese literature, has collected some most important passages on this subject, which he has been kind enough to place at our disposal, and which prove that the learned of the Celestial Empire have condescended to interest themselves in this monument. This is the manner in which the discovery is related in the Collection of Inscriptions, the *Kin-Che-Sui-Pien*:—*

"In the period of Tsong-Tching (1628–1643) of the dynasty of Ming, the Governor of Si-ngan-Fou, named Tsing Ling-Tseou, and surnamed Master Tsing-Tchang, had a young son, called Hoa-Sing. Nature had endowed him with rare intelli-

* Lib. 102. vol. viii., "Bibliothèque Imperiale," No. 574.

gence, and scarcely was he able to walk, before he knew how to fold his hands and adore Fo.* At the age of twelve years he showed the greatest ardour for study; but soon there came a spot upon his eyes, and at the moment when he was smiling at his father, he suddenly died.

"After having consulted the fates, his friends desired to bury him, to the south of the monastery of Kin-Ching-Sse (the City of Gold). When the earth had been dug to the depth of a few feet, a great stone was found. It was the inscription of the luminous doctrine which has spread through the Central Empire.

"This stone, which had been buried in the earth for a thousand years, was then brought to light. The inscription may be seen in the collection entitled *Lieou-yu-hoa-Tsi*. All the characters were perfect, and there was not one damaged. In the lower part, and at the extremity, are traced a multitude of strange characters, such as are seen in the books of Fo."†

"Here then is no European missionary, but a learned Chinese, an archæologist, who gives all the details of the discovery. Some Chinese books go further, and tell us what has become of the inscription.‡

According to their testimony, it is to be found in the Buddhist temple, named of the City of Gold, in the vicinity of Si-ngan-Fou. The great Imperial Geography contains the following passage:—

"King-ching-Sse (the monastery of the City of Gold). This monastery is situated outside the western suburb of Si-ngan-Fou. It was formerly the monastery of the Sublime Humanity Tsaung-Jin-Sse, and was founded under the Thang. This monastery possesses the inscriptions of the Pagoda of the

* The Chinese name for Buddha.

† The Chinese author means the Syriac characters, which he likens, by mistake, to the Sanscrit in the Buddhist books.

‡ See the "Universal Geography of China," 1st and 2d edition, and the "Geography of the Province of Chen-si."

Master of the Law, of the epoch of Thang, engraved upon sandal wood. It possesses also the inscription on stone, entitled 'Inscription upon stone of the luminous religion propagated in the Central Empire.' During the years Thien-Tchun (1457–1464), the strangers from Thsin repaired it."

These last words from the Imperial Geography, are worthy of remark, for they prove that in the fifteenth century, there were still Christians in China, enjoying freedom enough to be able to repair the monument that had been raised by the faith of their fathers in the seventh.

We might, if we pleased, indeed, contest the authority, of the authors just quoted, and insinuate that the new edition of the Imperial Geography was revised and corrected under the influence of the Jesuits, who were powerful enough, and skilful enough, to deceive the learned, lull to sleep their jealousy, and induce them to print, in an important, and official work, details of their own invention. All the passages favourable to the inscription which are to be found in the modern works of Chinese authors, may be put down at once to the account of the Jesuits, and so go for nothing.

But here again we have a very well known Chinese author, Min-Khieou, who wrote under the dynasty of Song, in 1060, and who, according to all probability, had not at that period experienced the influence of the Jesuits. He expresses himself thus in his work entitled "Description of Si-ngan-Fou:"—

"In the street of Justice (*T-Ning*) may be seen the temple of Po-Sse-Sse. It was built in the twelfth year of the period of Tching-Kouan (638) by order of the Emperor Tai-Tsoung, in favour of O-lo-Sse (Olopen) a religious stranger from the kingdom of Ta-Thsin." The same work says again;—"There was formerly at Si-ngan-Fou, eastward of the street of the Sweet Spring (*Li-Kuen*), a temple of Po-Sse (of Persia). In the second year of the period of I-Fong (677), three devout Persians desired that another temple should be constructed."

A Chinese Encyclopædia,* published under the dynasty of Song, in the year 1005, contains the following imperial decree:—

"In the ninth moon of the fourth year of the period Thien-Pao (745), the emperor issued a decree, in which it is said: 'The luminous doctrine came from Ta-Thsin; its partisans transmitted it from one to the other, so that at last it spread through the Central Kingdom. Then they began to build temples, and from thence came their name, temples of Ta-Thsin.' If it is desired to make them known to men, it is necessary to ascend to their origin; and that is why, in the two capitals of China, it is proper to change the name of temple of Po-Sse into temple of Ta-Thsin. It is proper that, in all the circles of the empire, this rule should be conformed to."

This imperial decree of 745 is reported in an encyclopædia published in 1005; the passages from Min-Khieou, author of a "Description of Si-ngan-Fou," were published in 1060; so this cannot be accounted for by the supposition of a "pious fraud of the Jesuits."

These decisive testimonials were repeated by Tsien-che (who was living in 1063, under the emperor Jin-Tsoung, and was a contemporary of the above-named Min-Khieou) in his work entitled, "Examination of the Luminous Doctrine."†

Tsien-che, after having cited the very words of the encyclopædia, and of Min-Khieou, his contemporary, continues thus:—"It was then, at this epoch, that the building of the temples of Ta-Thsin was commenced. The inscription says: 'In the kingdom of Ta-Thsin there was a man of superior virtue, named O-lo-Pen. In the ninth year of the period Tching-Kouan (636), he came to Si-ngan-Fou. In the seventh moon of the same period (638), a temple of Ta-Tshin was

* It is called *Tse-fou-youen-Kouei.*

† Bibliotheque Imperiale," No. 574, vol. viii. lib. 108.

built in the street of Justice and Peace (T-ning). O-lo-Pen is the same as O-lo-Sse, of whom Min-Khieou speaks. In the beginning, the temple was called the temple of Po-Sse. In the period I-Fong (676–679) it still retained its ancient name, but in the fourth year Tien-Pao (745) its name was changed into that of temple of Ta-Thsin."

Tsien-che, in his examination of the luminous doctrine, passes in review the various religions which have come from foreign countries and been propagated in the empire. He speaks especially in detail, and by no means in a tone of eulogy, of the Manicheans, or disciples of Mo-Ni (Manes), and of the worshippers of fire, or disciples of Zoroaster. After declaring that these doctrines are false and perverse, he continues thus:—"As to the luminous doctrine, which has spread like a river, its professors are the most intelligent of all the barbarians above-mentioned; they understand the characters (Chinese), but they flourish in their language, and tell quantities of lies. In reality, they do not differ from the Manicheans and worshippers of fire."*

We believe these quotations sufficient to prove positively that Chinese authors were, long before the existence of the Jesuits, perfectly well acquainted with the monument of Si-ngan-Fou, and the propagation of the Christian religion in the Celestial Empire. After that it appears superfluous to invoke the testimony of modern authors, but they may nevertheless carry with them some authority. Many letters written in the last century mention the existence of the inscription, and, what is very remarkable, do not say a syllable against its authenticity. How can we suppose that there should not be found in all the empire a single writer who should undertake to unveil the fraudulent artifice of the Christians and missionaries, especially, in those epochs of persecution, when the government, the mandarins and the people, were all leagued against Christi-

* Tsien-chi-King-Khiao, vol. viii. lib. 18. fol. 8.

anity? What a piece of good fortune it would have been for a writer of that time to be able to fling a good pamphlet in the face of the "Worshippers of the Lord of Heaven," and prove to the whole empire that they were no better than cheats and impostors! But nothing of the kind took place; though a thousand calumnies were invented against the missionaries, though they were accused of boiling little children to make opium, and of tearing out the eyes of sick people.

As for the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou, not a moment's doubt appears to have been entertained, for there is not the slightest insinuation of the kind to be found, even in the most violent manifestoes that have ever been published in China, against Christians and missionaries.

Here, surely, are proofs numerous and decisive enough in favour of the monument of Si-ngan-Fou. Let us be permitted, nevertheless, to add one consideration, which forms, in our opinion, a more conclusive proof than all the historic and scientific testimony that we have brought forward.

At the time of the discovery of the inscription, there were in the Chinese empire, a great number of missionaries of various orders, Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits of various countries. There were among them, Portuguese, Italians, Spaniards, French, Germans, in short, men from all the nations of Europe. These religious men had bidden farewell to their country, and sacrificed all they had, to travel to the end of the world, and labour in the conversion of the infidels, in the midst of privations and sufferings of every kind, and at the risk of their lives. These were the men who saw and studied the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou, and sent copies of it to Europe;* and we for our parts put entire trust in their sincerity. We are convinced that these devout persons did not

* Father Alvarez Semedo, who was at that time in Si-ngan-Fou, expresses himself thus:—"I have seen, read, and considered this stone, at my leisure; and have been astonished that it was so complete, and the letters so entire and well formed, after the lapse of so many years. ("Hist. Generale du Royaume de la Chine.")

conspire to attest unanimously the authenticity of what was only a fraud; we are convinced that, devoted to a religious life, and ready at any moment to seal their testimony with their blood, they did not lie with effrontery to Europe, China and the whole world.

They were, assuredly, not guilty of this "pious fraud" of which Voltaire speaks. Such a fraud would be a villany, of which it is impossible for any one to be guilty, until he had lost every feeling of honor and religion. Such a proceeding in the missionaries of China would indeed convict them, not only of being without conscience, but not even of sane mind; for no rational motive could have induced them to fabricate an audacious lie, which could serve no purpose, and which, if discovered, could not fail to ruin their mission, and cover them with shame and contempt in the eyes of their own neophytes, as well as the Christians of Europe.

The inscription of Si-ngan-Fou is then genuine, since its authenticity rests on the good faith, the honor, and the religion of the missionaries; as well as on the evidence of both history and science; and because never yet, either in East or West, has it been found possible to oppose to it one solid irrefragable argument.

A judicious member of the Institute has not hesitated to declare that "This famous monument, whose authenticity has long been questioned, out of hatred to the Jesuit missionaries who first made it known, rather than from any real examination, is now unanimously regarded as above all suspicion."*

* Saint Martin, "Hist. du bas Empire," vol. vi. p. 69.

CHAPTER III.

Religious Movement in the Chinese Empire.—Tolerance and Scepticism of the Chinese.—Propagation of Christianity in China.—First Metropolitans.—Progress of Proselytism.—Details drawn from Arab Literature.—Curious passage in a book entitled "The Chain of Chronicles."—Revolution in China.—Massacre of the Christians.—Arab Writers and Marco Polo.—Missionaries sent to China in the Tenth Century.—Notice of Prester John.—Letter of this Curious Personage to the Emperor of Constantinople.—Letter of Pope Alexander III. to Prester John.—Conversion of a Khan and a Tribe of Keraites in the Eleventh Century.—Numerous Conquests of this Mongol Tribe.—Origin of the Legend of Prester John.—Ung-khan, the last Sovereign of the Keraites.

At the period when the apostles of Christianity were erecting in the heart of the Chinese empire the remarkable monument of which we have spoken, there was a great religious movement going on in Upper Asia; a movement that has been by no means sufficiently remarked by those who have desired to contest the authenticity of the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou. At the very time when the missionaries of Jesus Christ were scattering the seeds of divine truth in the populous countries of Upper Asia, the disciples of Mahomet and Buddha were also animated by an ardent spirit of proselytism. It is known with what frantic fury the disciples of the Koran labored to convert men to their faith. Persia had been subjugated; its last sovereign forced, as we have seen, to seek a refuge in China, and dying at last in the mountains of Thibet. The Mahometans were already widely diffused, opening for themselves adroitly, by their commerce, a way into those countries of the remote East, which they could not subjugate by their arms. They traded in India, in Ceylon, in the Straits of Sunda, on the coasts of China, and even into the interior of

the empire, where they promulgated, in perfect liberty, the doctrine of the Koran. The Chinese saw the Manicheans and the Fire-worshippers rushing into their country in crowds, and the Buddhists especially arriving in countless caravans. A powerful reaction had taken place against them in India; Brahminism had pursued them everywhere, and forced them to expatriate themselves; and they fled by thousands to seek a refuge amongst the populations of Tartary, Thibet, and China, where already Pantheism and the subtle philosophy of Buddhism had made considerable progress amongst the disciples of Lao-tze and Confucius.

During the period referred to in the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou, China was governed by the celebrated dynasty of Thang, whose princes were for the most part enlightened and tolerant men, who endeavoured to keep up friendly relations with foreign countries.

It was under their rule that the Arabs and Persians kept up such continual communication by land and sea with the Celestial Empire. The Emperor Tai-Tsoung, whose edict in favor of toleration for the Luminous Religion we have already mentioned, does not speak of Christianity like a man convinced of its truth: nor, indeed, does he of any other religion. He is an eclectic philosopher, who affords a hospitable reception to all kinds of creeds with equal benevolence and equal indifference. He speaks like a prince who, having no state religion to defend, grants his protection to all modes of worship, and all symbols that do not oppose his government. His expressions are those of a true Chinese philosopher, disposed to believe that all religions are good according to time and place.

This strange syncretism was characteristic not only of the head of the state, but also of the whole nation. The worship of Buddha had become so firmly established in China, in concurrence with the two religions of the Lettered Class and of the Doctors of Reason, that many temples were raised to a

conjunction of the three systems, in which the statues of Buddha, of Lao-tze, and of Confucius were placed on the same level on the common altar, and honoured by similar rites: the three divinities were represented standing, Confucius in the middle, between Buddha and Lao-tze, holding each by the hand, and with three wax lights burning at their feet.

On the gate of temples of this kind was inscribed "San-Khiao-Tang," that is, Temple of the Three Religions; and in the interior there shone above the altar three great golden characters, which signify, "The Three Religions are but One:" San-Khiao-y-Khiao.

If all doctrines were received in China with the same sympathy, or rather the same indifference, why should it be thought surprising that there should be at this time a colony of Christian priests, freely preaching the Gospel, building churches, and receiving a tolerant edict in favour of their religion by the philosophic emperor, who solemnly declares it to be "mysterious, excellent, peaceful," and which he respectfully compares to the metaphysical system of Lao-tze?

The inscription of Si-ngan-Fou has, then, furnished us with authentic information on the propagation of the Christian Faith in Upper Asia from the year 636 till 781. We found, however, in the traditions of the Syrian Church, traces of evangelical preaching in China previous to that period. We have seen that the Patriarch Saliba-Zacha, appointed metropolitans for Heria (in Khorassan), for Samarcand, and for China—a proceeding which denotes that Christianity was already flourishing in those countries. The same sources will furnish us with documents to show that these distant missions still subsisted after the erection of the monument of Si-ngan-Fou in 781—another confirmation of its authenticity. Is there anything wonderful in finding Christianity spoken of in an inscription when we have certain proofs that there were missionaries in the country both before and after the erection of the stone?

Timotheus, who occupied the patriarchal see of the Nesto-

rians, from 777 till 820, sent religious men to preach the Gospel to the various nations of Upper Asia. At this time, there was in Assyria a very celebrated Nestorian monastery called Beth-hobeh, where resided a very learned monk versed in all the Syrian, Persian, and Arabic tongues. His name was Subchal-Jésu. The Patriarch Timotheus, considering this man well suited to the mission, made him a bishop, and sent him to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of the environs of the Caspian Sea. The hopes of the patriarch were not disappointed; for Subchal-Jésu brought a great number of these people to the knowledge of the truth, built several churches, and ordained many priests. Encouraged by this success, he afterwards penetrated further into the remote East, and traversed Tartary and China, scattering everywhere on his route the seed of the Gospel. This apostle had not the consolation of long enjoying the fruit of his labours; for, as he was returning towards Assyria to visit the Patriarch Timotheus, and recover himself a little in the society of his brethren, he was stopped on the road, and murdered by robbers.

The patriarch appointed two persons, named Kardage and Jaballah, to be his successors, and added to them fifteen monks from the monastery of Beth-hobeh. Seven of these, namely, Thomas, Zaché, Sem, Ephraim, Simeon, Ananias, and David, were consecrated bishops. Some of them were sent to India, others to China, or *Cathay*, as people used to call it at that time.

Soon after his arrival at the place of his mission, Jaballah wrote to the Patriarch Timotheus:—"By the help of your prayers, and of the grace of Christ, many nations have been converted to the true faith; and it is important to place at their head, bishops chosen from amongst the monks who accompanied us to these countries."

The Patriarch replied to him and his companions in the following manner(*):—"It is true that the ordination of one

* Thomas Margensis, in "Historia Monastica," lib. iv. ch. xx.; Assemani, "Bibliotheca Or," vol. iii. p. 491.; Mosheim, "Hist. Tart." p. 14.

bishop absolutely requires the presence of three others; but since you are at present in regions where it is not possible to collect this number, it is granted to you by the word of the Lord, which rules and governs all things, that you and Bishop Kardage shall consecrate the bishop whom you shall have chosen. To represent the third prelate, you will place the book of the Gospels on the seat at the right hand of the altar, and consecrate the first bishop according to this rite, and by the grace of God. As for the rest, they may then be consecrated by three bishops. I pray the Holy Spirit to pour out his blessing upon you, as he formerly did on the Apostles."

Thomas, Bishop of Marajah, who has preserved for us this valuable correspondence in his "History of the Monastery of Beth-hobeth," wrote towards the end of the eighth century, and states that he had himself seen the letter of Patriarch Timotheus to Bishop Jeballah; adding also, that the patriarch wrote to him to inform him that David, one of the newly consecrated bishops, had been chosen Metropolitan of China.*

We have no very circumstantial information concerning the state of the Christian Missions in high Asia, but we must presume that they were very flourishing, and that the number of neophytes was considerable. We see, in fact, that from the beginning of the sixth century the hierarchy was perfectly established, and the metropolitans succeeded one another regularly. So advanced an organisation leaves room to suppose that Christianity had already made great progress. We read in a canon of the Synod, held in 850, by the Patriarch Theodosius, and which recalls the prescriptions of those of Nicea and Ezechiel in 570, that all metropolitan bishops were commanded to repair to the patriarch once in four years; but that the metropolitans of India and China, were dispensed from this necessity on account of the great distance. Here are the ac-

* Sinentibus Metropolitani datum fuisse Davidem en Epistola Timothei dedicat. Thomas Marg. "Hist. Monas." lib. iv. ch. xx.

tual words of the canon, as they have been preserved to us by the learned Maronite Assemani:

"That the six metropolitans of Hilam, Prath, Assur, &c., who are not very far removed from the patriarchal seat, do not fail to come like the others every four years. As for those placed at an enormous distance, like those of India China, Persia, and Samarcand, who are hindered by lofty mountains infested with robbers, and by tempestuous seas continually occasioning shipwrecks, they may abstain from coming even though they would willingly do so; but let them not fail to communicate with the patriarch by letter every six years. They will also take care to levy in all the towns, great or small, a just and suitable tribute, according to the canonical rules; and to send this to the patriarch, as a contribution to the expenses of the patriarchal house."*

This tax demanded by the synod was doubtless a sort of tithe, the institution of which indicates an already flourishing and regularly organised church. The far East possessed also at this epoch several monasteries, where the monks lived in community; for we find in the "Bibliotheque Orientale" of Assemani, a notice of a book called "The History of a Monk of China, and of Abraham." This production, which in all probability dates from the eighth or ninth century, begins thus: "This is what Abraham, Bishop of Bassora, says:—I was passing one day near the cell of one of the monks of China, and I asked permission to make a cell opposite to his, and to devote myself to the same exercises; this he granted." It was certainly a curious thing to see a Bishop of Bassora traversing China, visiting the Christians of those distant countries, and settling at last near a Chinese monk, for the purpose of devoting himself to the religious exercises which he practised. The dialogue between Abraham of Bassora and the Chinese monk would certainly afford details of the great-

* Assemani, Bibl. Or., vol. iii. p. 347.

est interest, with respect to the state of Christianity in those countries, and we have made many attempts to obtain this precious Arabic MS., but unfortunately without success.

The literature of the Arabs is, in fact, the only one that can bring us on the track of the propagation of the Gospel in the far East. It has already afforded us several important indications; and it is also from it we learn what became of the disciples of Olopen, of whom mention is made in the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou. The presence of Christians in China in the ninth century, has been noticed by Renaudot, in an Arabic narrative of a voyage to India, which he translated first, and which was long erroneously attributed to the celebrated historian Massoudi. This part of the narrative is by an intelligent and well-informed man, named Abou-Zeyd Hassan de Syraf. He speaks from the information of an eye-witness, Ibn Vahab, a Mussulman merchant of Bassora, who had visited not only the ports of China, but also the imperial city Si-ngan-Fou, situated at the distance of two months' journey from the sea.

In the pages of the Arab writer we find a very curious incident, which proves that there existed in China a tolerably accurate knowledge of Jesus Christ and his apostles. The author relates that Ibn Vahab arrived at Si-ngan-Fou, and was introduced into the Imperial palace. The Emperor, after having interrogated him on the affairs of the West, commanded the interpreter to say to him these words, "Should you recognise your Master if you were to see him? The Emperor meant the Apostle of God,—to whom may God be gracious! I replied, And how can I see him, since he is now above with the Most High God?

"The Emperor answered, That is not what I meant; I was speaking only of his face." The Arab then said, "Yes;" and thereupon the Emperor ordered a box to be brought and placed before him, and from this he drew some papers, saying to the interpreter, Show him his Master!

"I recognised on these pages, the portraits of the prophets and when I did so, I uttered prayers for them, and moved my lips. The Emperor did not know that I recognised the proph ets, and told the interpreter to ask me what I moved my lips for. The interpreter did as he was ordered, and I replied, I was praying for the prophets. The Emperor asked how I knew them; and I answered, By means of the attributes which distinguish them. Thus, here is Noah in his Ark; he who saved himself with his family, when the Most High commanded the waters to overwhelm the whole earth with its inhabitants: Noah and his family alone escaped. At these words the Emperor began to laugh, and said, You guessed rightly when you said it was Noah; but as to the submersion of the whole earth, that is a thing we do not admit. The deluge only affected a part of the earth, and not either our country or India." Ibn-Vahab reported that he feared to refute what the Emperor had stated by making use of the arguments that he was acquainted with, seeing that the Prince would not have admitted their force. But he resumed, "Here is Moses and his staff, with the children of Israel."

"That is true, said the Emperor; but Moses showed himself on a very small stage; and his people were not very well disposed towards him.

"I resumed, Here is Jesus, sitting upon an ass, and surrounded by his Apostles.

"The Emperor said, He, too, had very little time to appear on the stage. His mission did not last more than thirty months."

Ibn-Vahab continued to pass the prophets in review; but we will confine ourselves to a part of what was said. Ibn-Vahab added that above the figure of each prophet there was a long inscription, which he supposed to contain their names, the names of their countries, and the circumstances accompanying their mission. Afterwards he continued thus, "I saw the face of the prophet (Mahomet), upon whom be peace!

He was mounted on a camel, and his companions, also on camels, were placed around him. They all wore Arab coverings on their feet, and had tooth-picks at their girdles. As I began to weep, the Emperor desired the interpreter to ask me the cause of my tears. I replied, There is our prophet—our Lord, and my cousin,* upon him be peace!

"The Emperor answered, You have spoken truly; he and his people have raised the most glorious empire, only he has not been able to see with his own eyes the empire he founded. The edifice was only seen by those who came after him.

"I saw the pictures of a great number of other prophets: some were making the sign of a cross by uniting the thumb and forefinger, as if they meant by this movement to signify some truth. Certain of the figures were represented standing on their feet, and making signs with their fingers towards heaven. There were also other pictures, but the interpreter told me these represented the prophets of India and China."†

The Chinese Emperor who held this strange dialogue with the Arab Ibn-Vahab was, doubtless, Hi-Tsoung, who ascended the imperial throne in 874. The celebrated dynasty of Thang was then approaching its decline, and China was pregnant with one of those formidable revolutions, which have so often convulsed the Empire, but always ended in re-establishing things on the same basis and with the ancient institutions. It was in the reign of Hi-Tsoung, and almost immediately after the departure of the Arab, that the disturbance of which the narrative of Abou-Zeyd spake began.

The insurrection burst out simultaneously in the provinces of Pe-Tche-Li and Chan-Toung, to the north of the Yellow

* Ibn Vahab stated himself to be of the family of Mahomet.

† The box evidently contained a collection of portraits of the divinities and principal persons of Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, and other religions of China and India. The general spirit of the princes of the dynasty of Thang, was that of toleration or indifference. Sometimes a sovereign would seem to lean towards Christianity, sometimes to the worship of Fo or Buddha, and sometimes to the doctrines of Tao-tse, or of the disciples of Lao-tze.—*Note by M. Reinaud.*

River. The chief of the rebels was Hoang-Tchao, named Banschoua by the Arab writer. He was of a mercantile family which had made a considerable fortune by some speculations in salt; he had studied a good deal, and after having finished his classical course he wished to become a candidate for the Mandarinate. He passed successfully his examinations for the bachelor's degree, but broke down in those for the doctor's; and his wounded pride then drove him into the conspiracies of secret societies, which, in China, as elsewhere, are the refuge of ambitious malcontents. The rebellion soon spread over the whole country, and Hoang-Tchao became its sole chief.

The middle class Chinaman by no means aspired, however, after the honour of becoming the founder of a new dynasty, and at first he refused the title of Emperor, and called himself merely "The General who attacks the Heavens." In 879 he led his revolutionary bands into Fo-kien and Tche-Kiang, and took the capital of the latter province, the town of Han-Tcheou-Fou, situated at a short distance from the celebrated seaport Khan-Fou. In this town he ordered those frightful massacres, in which some of those numerous foreigners who came to trade in China were involved. Such is an abridged account of the narrative of Chinese historians. But it is in this way that the Arab writer gives the story of the events which overthrew the celebrated dynasty of Thang, and substituted for it that of Song:—

"That which has turned China from the course of law and justice in which she was previously proceeding, and which has interrupted the expeditions against the port of Syraf, is the enterprise of a rebel, who did not belong to the royal house, and who was named Banschout (Hoang-Tchao). This man began by an artful line of conduct and insubordination; then he took arms, and began to commit extortion on private persons; by little and little, evil disposed men began to gather round him; his name became formidable; his resources in-

creased; his ambition was fired; and among the cities of China that he attacked was Khan-Fou, a port at which the Arab merchants disembark. Between this city and the sea there is a distance of some days' journey; it is seated on a great river, and bathed with sweet water.

"The people of Kahn-Fou having closed their gates, the rebel besieged them for a long while. That took place in the course of the year 264 (A. D. 878). The town was at length taken, and the inhabitants put to the sword. Persons acquainted with events that take place in China, report that on this occasion there perished a hundred and twenty thousand persons—Mussulmans, Jews, Christians, and Magi, who had settled in the city for the sake of trade; not to mention the numbers killed who were natives of the country. The number of persons of the four religions mentioned who perished is known, because the Chinese government levied a tax upon them according to their number. The rebel, moreover, cut down the mulberry and other trees which were on the territory of the city. We mention the mulberry in particular, because the leaves of this tree serve to feed the worm which makes the silk, until the creature constructs for itself its last dwelling. This was the reason why silk was no longer sent to Arabia and other countries."

The Empire of China was after that time, concludes the Arab narrator, much in the state Persia was in formerly, when Alexander killed Darius, and divided its provinces among his generals. According to the testimony of the Arab traveller, there were at Khan-Fou a great number of Christians; and they were massacred along with the multitude of foreigners who flocked thither to traffic on the coast of China, and usually to the port of Khan-Fou. It is remarkable, and tends to show how much this Arab writer is worthy of our confidence, that Marco Polo, who visited this great commercial depôt four hundred years afterwards speaks of it in the same terms.

"And also I must let you know," says the illustrious Veno

tian, "that twenty-five miles from this city is the sea, between north-east and east; and there is a town called Ganfoo, a very good port, whither come immense vessels and large quantities of merchandise of great value from India and other parts."* The factories of the numerous foreigners who come to trade with the Chinese were probably at Han-Tcheou-Fou, a town but a little way from the sea, and which, being the capital of the province was of considerable importance. It had become a great commercial centre for all parts of China, and it was so in the time of Marco Polo, who speaks very little of Khan-Fou, but gives a magnificent description of this town, which he calls Quinsay.

"Quinsay is so large that it is certainly a hundred miles round; and there are in it twelve thousand bridges so high that great ships might pass under them; and no one need wonder that there are so many bridges, for I tell you that the city is entirely in the water and surrounded by the water, so that there must be many bridges in order to go about it. And within the city there is a lake which is certainly thirty miles round; and round the lake many beautiful palaces and fine houses belonging to the great people and rich and powerful men who reside in the place. And there are many abbeys and churches of idolaters, and the houses of the city have high towers of stone, where valuable things are put, for fear of fire. For the other habitations are of wood. The people are idolaters, and eat the flesh of dogs and other vile animals that Christians would on no account eat.

"Know, also, that within this city is a mount, and on the mount a tower, and on the tower a plate of metal; and whenever fire or any other cause of alarm happens in the city, a man put there for the purpose, strikes this plate with a hammer, with which he is provided, so strongly, that he is heard afar off; so that when one hears that sound, one may know

* Marco Polo, edition by the Société des Géographie, vol. I. p. 170.

certainly that there is fire or some other distress. All the streets are paved with stone, and also all the roads in the country of *Mangy*,* and one can ride upon them very conveniently; and if it were not for this pavement, one could not well ride, for the country is very low, and when it rains there are many pools. And know, also, that this city has full three thousand baths, with springs that issue from the ground, from which the people have much delight and cleanliness; and the ocean sea is at about twenty-five miles off, near the town that they call Ganfoo; and there are many great ships there, which come and go from India and other foreign parts, and bring and take back merchandise of such kinds as are thought of most worth in the city; and from the city of Quinsay there goes a great river unto the sea-port.

"Also there is in this city the palace of the king,† which is the greatest in the world. It is ten miles round, and is surrounded by high embattled walls, and within the walls there are the finest and most delectable gardens in the world, and many fountains and lakes full of fish; and in the midst is the palace, which is very large and very fine."‡

This description is remarkably accurate. We have had occasion, during our long residence in China, to visit Han-Tcheou-Fou, which is still one of the finest and most considable cities in the empire. It is still intersected by numerous canals, on which thousands of junks, painted in bright colours, and brilliantly varnished, convey the rich merchants and elegant literati of the province of Tche-kiang, in various directions.

Marco Polo must have been, at Han-Tcheou-Fou, delightfully reminded of his native Venice, with its gondolas and its warm climate.

* Southern China.

† Han-Tcheou-Fou has been the capital of the empire at various epochs, and especially under the dynasty of Song.

‡ Voyage de Marco Polo, MS. of the Imp. Lib. fol. 67 &c.

It was in this city that the massacre mentioned by the Arab traveller took place; and it is to be presumed that there were also Christians in other towns, and that they were no more spared than those of Han-Tcheou-Fou by the bands of Hoang-Tchao. This insurrectionary chief, after having ravaged several provinces of the South, increased his army with all the vagabonds and malcontents whom he met on his road, and he soon found himself at the head of two hundred thousand men. Then he changed his title of "General who attacks the heavens," for "General aided by heaven;" meaning to indicate that the revolution had been sanctioned and consecrated by success. After having issued a manifesto, and published it in all the provinces, he marched openly upon Si-ngan-Fou, the capital of the empire; and his advance was so rapid, that the Emperor had scarcely time to escape into Thibet. Hoang-Tchao then entered the capital, and declaring himself Emperor, put to death the members of the Imperial family who had not had time to escape.

The Christianity planted by Olopen, and which had long been so flourishing under the Thang dynasty, had doubtless much to suffer during these political disturbances, and it is probably from this epoch we may date the decay and ruin of the missions of China. The preaching of the Gospel in the Celestial Empire was however not entirely abandoned, and the increasing difficulties it had to contend with, the massacre of foreigners above alluded to, and the cessation of commercial relations of China with Persia and Arabia, could not put a stop to it. According to the text of an Arab writer named Aboulfarage, cited by Golius in his notes to the astronomical treatise of Alfergany, it is known that in the latter half of the tenth century, a Christian Monk of Nadjran, in Arabia Felix, was directed by his Patriarch to go with some other religious men to China, and afford assistance to the Christians of that country. Renaudot* has, with his customary sagacity, per

* Anc. Relation, &c., p. 269.

ceived the value of this isolated passage, and recognised in the patriarch mentioned by Golius, the Archbishop of Seleucia on the Tigris, who had established his residence at Bagdad, and who, under the title of Catholicus, exercised jurisdiction over all the Nestorian Churches of Persia, India, and China.

"Unfortunately," observes M. Reinaud,* "the narrative of Golius presented obscurities and even contradictions. It did not appear to be very clear who was this writer of the name of Aboulfarage, on whose authority the account rested. It was asked by what route ecclesiastics from Bagdad could have proceeded to China, at an epoch when travelling was extremely difficult. Besides, if towards the end of the tenth century these ecclesiastics had made their way to China, why were not others subsequently charged with the same mission?"

These questions, however, have been triumphantly answered by M. Reinaud himself. The learned professor of Arab literature in the "*Ecole des Langues Orientales*," whose zeal for all that can promote the true progress of science is indefatigable, has discovered in a valuable manuscript, the confirmation of the fact advanced by M. Reinaud on the authority of Golius.

"The Royal Library," says M. Reinaud, "has received from Constantinople, by the intervention of M. Le Baron de Slane, a copy of the second volume of the *Kitab-al-Fihrist*, made from one in a library of that capital. The Kitab-al-Fihrist, of which the Royal Library has hitherto possessed only the first volume, is a kind of Arab bibliography, classed according to subjects, and arranged in the year 377 of the Hegira" (A. D. 987). The greater part of the works mentioned in it have not come down to our time; but it is the source to which most of our modern Oriental bibliographers have resorted for all that concerns the first four centuries of Arab literature.

The author, Mohammed, the son of Ishac, surnamed Aboul-

* Note addressed to M. Charles Lenormand, and inserted in the Correspondant, vol. xv. p. 761

farages, lived at Bagdad, and carried on the trade of a book seller. In folio 227 *verso* of the new copy of the second volume, there is mention made of the fact alluded to by Golius, and it is evident that this is a copy of the very work so long sought in vain. The passage is as follows:—"In the year 377 (A. D. 987) I found living in the Christians' quarter, behind the church, a monk of Nadjran, who seven years before had been sent by the *Djalolik* (Catholic) to China, along with five other ecclesiastics, to set the affairs of Christianity there in order. I saw a man still young, and of an agreeable countenance, but he spoke little, and never opened his mouth but to answer the questions put to him. I asked him for some information concerning his travels, and he answered that Christianity had become extinct in China.

"The Christians who had been in that country had perished in different ways, the church that had been built for them had been destroyed, and there remained not one single Christian in China. The monk, not having found any one whom he could aid by his ministry, had returned more quickly than he went." The Arab writer does not express himself very clearly as to the route the ecclesiastics had followed; but he says that the distance by sea differed according to the way they took, and that the navigation was very troublesome, as few persons could be found acquainted with those latitudes. At the time when the monk visited China, the capital where the sovereign resided was called *Thadjouyé*. The empire had previously been divided into two territories; but one of the two competitors for sovereignty had succumbed to the other, who now remained sole master.

"Let us pause a moment," says M. Reinaud, "to consider these various circumstances. At the epoch to which the inscription of Si-ngan-Fou relates, China was under the laws of the dynasty of Thang. It was a brilliant period of Chinese history, for the princes of the dynasty of Thang were in general enlightened and tolerant men, who sought to maintain

friendly relations with foreign nations. It was under their dominion that the Arabians and Persians kept up so active an intercourse both by sea and land with the Celestial Empire."

It was in this period that Christianity was propagated in China, but the Thangs disappeared at the beginning of the tenth century, in the midst of intestine wars, and the other scourges, which anarchy always brings in its train. Various factions were formed, and it was not till towards the year 960 that the dynasty of Song established itself; which was in power at the time the monk of Nadjran undertook his mission (about 980); though, as it appears, it had hardly yet established its authority over the whole empire. The Christians had of course suffered in the general confusion, like the rest of the nation; but when order had been restored, a violent reaction took place in favour of the ancient traditions of the country, and this finished what war and tyranny had unfortunately begun.

These revolutionary movements and changes of dynasty, so frequent in China, could not but offer numerous obstacles to the propagation of the gospel in those countries; but a strong presumption is afforded that the progress of the faith, thus obstructed in the Central Empire, extended beyond the Great Wall, amongst the Tartar tribes, who were preparing to play so great a part on the theatre of the world.

Towards the commencement of the eleventh century, a prodigious sensation was excited in Europe, Asia, and Africa, by the conversion to Christianity of a prince known by the name of *Priest*, or *Prester John*. The renown of this monarch went on increasing through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,—for this partly real and partly fanciful personage appeared not to be subject to the law of mortality. The type still remained, and was continually receiving new embellishments. It was agreed that this sacerdotal person surpassed in power and riches all the potentates of the earth; on that point there was no difference of opinion. But as to whereabout this won-

derful priestly Crœsus, this kingly pontiff, was to be found, there were very wide differences indeed. Some placed him in Africa,—in Ethiopia; others proclaimed that his incomparable kingdom was situated in Asia, but could not decide whether it was in India, Tartary, or Thibet. The country, as well as the title and the religion of this mysterious potentate, furnished the erudite of the time, and also the tellers of stories with materials for dissertations without end, and a monstrous heap of fables and contradictions.

There was, indeed, so much written in the middle ages about Prester John, that it is not very easy to discover what little portion of truth may exist amidst the thousand accounts, which scarcely agree in any one particular. Otho of Freisingen, Alberic of Trois Fontaines, William of Tripoli, Vincent de Beauvais, Jacques de Vitry, Marco Polo, Plan-Carpin, Rubruk, Jordan de Severac, Mandeville; in short, all the travellers and writers of the period, busied themselves about Prester John, and related the most marvellous things concerning him. Nothing, however, can equal what this strange personage says of himself; or, at least, in a letter attributed to him, which was addressed to the Emperor of Constantinople.* Mosheim,† who copies it from Assemani‡, regards it as apocryphal; but many other critics, and among others, Marsden§, are disposed to admit its authenticity. Authentic or not, however, it is so curious, and so illustrative of the spirit of the time, that we shall not hesitate to translate it almost entire:—

"*John Priest, by the Power and the Virtue of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord of Lords, to the Sovereign of Constantinople, may he enjoy health and prosperity by the grace of God.*

"It has been made known to our Majesty, that you esteem our excellence, and that there has been speech among you of our grandeur. We have learned from our secretary that you had the intention to send us some arti-

* Probably the Emperor Alexis Comnenus, who died in 1118.

† Hist. Tart. in Appendix, p. 29.

‡ Bibl. Orient. vol. iii. part ii. chap. ix. p. 490.

§ Travels of Marco Polo, pp. 192, 193.

cles of luxury and curiosity. What we desire and wish to know is, whether you have, like us, the true faith—whether you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ? We know that you are a man, and that your little people take you for a sovereign, although you are but a mortal destined to corruption. If you have need of anything that would be agreeable to you, make it known to us by our secretary, and you shall obtain it from our munificence. If you like to come to our dominions, you shall be appointed to be the greatest and most worthy of our house, and you may partake of our abundance. Should it please you to go back again, you shall set forth overwhelmed by benefits.

"Do you desire to know the grandeur and excellence of our dynasty, the extent of our power and dominion? Know and believe that I am the Priest John, the servant of God, and that I surpass in riches, in power, and in virtue, all the kings of the earth. Sixty-two kings are tributary to me. I am a zealous Christian, and I protect and support by my alms the poor Christians who are subjects of our merciful empire.

"We have formed the project of visiting the sepulchre of our Lord, at the head of a great army, as becomes the glory of our Majesty; and we wish to combat and to humble the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose name be blessed and exalted.

"Our magnificence dominates the three Indies; our domains, setting out from Further India, where reposes the body of St. Thomas the Apostle,* advance across the deserts to the place where the sun is born, and return by a circuit to the ruins of Babylon, not far from the tower of Babel.

"Sixty-two provinces, of which few are Christian, obey us; each has its king, and all are tributary to us. In our territories are found elephants, dromedaries, camels, and animals of every species under heaven. Milk and honey flow in our country, and no poison is ever found there. One of our provinces, which is inhabited by Pagans, is traversed by a river called the Indus. Issuing from Paradise, it rolls its waters through the entire province, and in them are found emeralds, sapphires, and other precious stones. In another province pepper grows in abundance, and the earth is covered by an immense forest filled with serpents. This forest is situated at the foot of Mount Olympus, whence springs up an inexhaustible fountain, whose waters preserve all kinds of flavours. Then comes an arid sea of sand. At three days' journey from this immense desert there are inhabited mountains, amongst which there flows a stream that cannot be approached. This stream throws itself into a great river, into which the inhabitants of our countries plunge and bring up wonderful quantities of precious stones. Beyond that river are ten Jewish tribes, who, although they choose their own kings, are nevertheless the slaves and tributaries of our Excellency.

"In another province of our States, near the torrid zone, there are worms,

* It will be observed how ur rarying was the tradition of the apostleship of St. Thomas in India.

called in our language Salamanders, which can only live in the fire. They envelop themselves in a kind of tissue, like the insects that produce silk, and the substance is wrought with care by the ladies of our palace, and thus we have stuffs and garments of it for the use of our Excellency. These garments can only be purified by being placed in a fierce fire.

"We believe that we have no equal, either for the quantity of our riches, or the number of our subjects. When we issue forth to make war upon our enemies, we have borne before us, upon thirteen cars, thirteen large and precious crosses, ornamented with gold and jewels. Each cross is followed by ten thousand horsemen and a hundred thousand foot soldiers, without counting the men of war, charged to conduct the baggage and provisions of the army.

"When we go out merely on horseback, our Majesty is preceded by a cross without either gold, jewels, or any ornament, in order that we may always remember the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; then there is a golden vase filled with earth, in order to remind us that our body must return whence it came—that is to say, to the earth; and lastly, there is a silver vase filled with gold, that every one may understand that we are the Lord of Lords. Our magnificence surpasses all the riches in the world.

"Every year we visit the body of the prophet St. Daniel, in the desert of Babylon. We go there armed because of the serpents. In our country is caught the fish whose blood is used for the purple dye. We rule over the Amazons, and likewise over the Brahmins. The palace in which our Sublimity resides, is like that built by St. Thomas, for Gondophorus, King of India.* Its woodwork is of the most costly kind, and its roof is of ebony, to avoid the danger of fire. At the summit of this palace are seen two golden globes, surmounted each by a carbuncle, in order that the gold may shine during the day, and the carbuncle at night. The tables on which the repasts are spread in this palace are, some of gold and some of amethyst; the columns that support them are of ivory.

"The chamber where our Sublimity reposes, is ornamented with various works in gold, silver, and jewels; and is perpetually perfumed by the odour of the balsams burnt in it.

"Our bed is of sapphire. Why does our Dignity choose to adopt the title of Priest? That is what your prudence need not be surprised at. We have in our court many officers, whose dignity, functions, and titles, are borrowed from the ecclesiastical hierarchy. There are even some who are superior to us with respect to their divine functions. Thus the master of our pantry is a primate as well as a king; our cupbearer, an archbishop and king; our chamberlain, bishop and king; our marshal, archimandrate and king; our chief cook is an abbé and a king; it is therefore not repugnant to our Majesty to adopt the titles of which our court is full. If we have chosen an inferior title and rank, it has been out of humility. Our empire extends on one side for four months' journey, on the other no one can

* The tradition, it will be seen, is still the same.

know how great it is. If you can count the sands of the sea, and the stars of heaven, you may number my domains, and reckon my power."

Such is the pompously extravagant epistle addressed by Prester John to the Emperor Comnenus; and many missives in the same style were sent at various epochs to the Emperors of the East and West, to the Pope, the King of France, and even, it is said, to the King of Portugal.* These curious documents contained, like that we have copied, an ostentatious account of the fabulous power of this royal pontiff, but nowhere sufficiently exact indications of the locality of his dominions to enable us to identify them. Every one was convinced, nevertheless, of the existence of this extraordinary personage, and the wonders of his empire formed a common theme for discussion. It represented the Eldorado of the time, in the excited imaginations of the people.

The great renown of Prester John induced the Pope Alexander III. to write to him (in 1177), and he addresses him by the title of "King of the Indies, and Most Holy of Priests."†

After having shown, at the commencement of his letter, the supremacy of the successor of St. Peter, and the authority given him to regulate the affairs of the Church, and determine points of doctrine, he speaks of a certain "Master Philip," his physician and servant, who had received from powerful and distinguished people in the East some communications relative to the desire which Priest John had to be instructed in the doctrines of the Church of Rome. Alexander then endeavours to demonstrate how important it is for those who call themselves Christians to hold the true Catholic faith. He exhorts Priest John, therefore, to repent of his errors, and to give his full confidence to Master Philip, who will explain to

* Alberic, Chronicon, p. 245.

† The memory of this singular personage has been preserved in the proverbial expressions in some countries, as for instance in Germany, where people say of one who has lived happily, "*Er lebt so vergnugt als wörre er in der Priestes Johannes Land*," He lives as pleasantly as if he were in Prester John's country.

him the true principles of the Christian faith, without which "one cannot hope for salvation."

This brief of Alexander III. gives us to understand that Prester John and the subjects of his vast empire did not profess a very orthodox creed. In fact, the chronicles of the time are unanimous in representing them as tainted with the Nestorian heresy. As early as the year 1143 the Bishop of Gabala, legate of the Church of Armenia, addressed to the Pope Eugene III. the following report:*—"Some years ago," said the prelate, "a prince named John, who dwelt beyond Persia and Armenia, at the extremity of the East, professing, along with his people, Nestorianism, and uniting in himself the characters of sovereign and priest, came and waged war against Media and Persia, and having seized upon Ecbatana cut the armies of his enemies to pieces."

Jacques de Vitry expresses himself thus†:—"The Nestorians have mortally infected the greater part of the East with their doctrine, and especially the empire of the very puissant Prince, vulgarly called Priest or Prester John."

Finally, Matthew Paris reports the receipt, in 1237, of a letter from Brother Philip, prior of the Dominicans in Palestine, which declares Nestorianism to be predominant in India, the *kingdom of Prester John*,‡ and the most distant States of the East.

From all these documents it may certainly be inferred that Prester John was a real person, in whom European Christendom was powerfully interested. He was, it seems, a potent prince of Upper Asia, professing, with his subjects, the Nestorianism which for a long time was actively propagated in those countries; and all these facts are placed beyond doubt

* Othoni Freising. Chronicon, ch. xxxii. p. 146. This recital, which has been transmitted to us by Otho of Freisingen, is also to be found in the "Chronique d'Albéril," p. 307.

† Hist. Hierosl., l. 1. c. lxxvi.

‡ Per regnum sacerdotis Joannis. (Mathieu Paris, Hist. p. 440.)

by the testimony of history and the most authentic narrative of travellers.

At the period when the West began to hear for the first time of this pontiff king, Upper Asia had undoubtedly witnessed numerous conversions to Christianity. In the first year of the eleventh century, a Tartar prince received baptism with two hundred thousand of his subjects; and these, according to Mares,* are the circumstances in which the event took place. There was, at the north-west of the Great Wall of China, beyond the Desert of Gobi, a considerable tribe of Tartars, named Kéraites. One day, the sovereign of these numerous hordes was engaged in hunting, and having pursued the yellow sheep and wild yaks for a long time amongst steep mountains covered with snow, he happened to lose his way. He sought for a long time to recover the right track, but in vain; he only wandered about in the midst of these solitudes where there was no trace of human habitation, and had at last stopped quite discouraged and overcome by a vague feeling of terror, when suddenly a mysterious personage appeared to him, and uttered these words,—"If thou wilt believe in Jesus Christ, I will rescue thee from this peril, and show thee thy way." The king of the Kéraites, vividly struck by this apparition, promised to embrace Christianity, which already counted numerous partisans among his subjects. Upon this promise the mysterious personage served him as a guide, and after having brought him back to the right way, suddenly vanished.

The prince of the Kéraites having returned to his camp, hastened to relate to his courtiers what had happened to him, and expressed to them his determination to accomplish his his vow. There were at that time in the country many Christian merchants who had come from the West, and he had them summoned, and demanded from them information

* Mares in Vita Bar-Tobi. This Nestorian patriarch died in 999.

concerning the religion of Jesus Christ. The Tartar sovereign then, after having studied the Christian doctrine, received baptism with two hundred thousand of his subjects.

Mares adds in his chronicle,—"He had an altar constructed, upon which he placed a cross and a gospel, and dedicated it to Saint Sergius. He learned the Pater Noster, the Tresagion, and a prayer that begins thus: "To you, Lord and Master of all things,"* &c. The facts which we have just related from Mares, are also mentioned in various writings of that period. This is what is said on the subject in the History of the Oriental Dynasties, by Aboulfarages.†

The Nestorian patriarch, John,‡ received from Ebed Jesu, metropolitan of Marou, a town of Khorassan, a letter in these words:—"The king of the people, called Kéraites, who inhabit the interior of Turkey, towards the north-east, being one day hunting on certain mountains of his dominions, which were then covered with snow, lost his way." Then, after having related the miraculous conversion of the Tartar prince, the metropolitan of Marou continues thus:—"The king of the Kéraites has just invited me to visit him, or to send him a priest who may bestow baptism on him. He has also interrogated me concerning the fasts, saying, 'We have no other food than milk and meat—how, then, shall we fast?' He mentioned that two hundred thousand individuals were ready to follow his example; and the patriarch John, in reply, desired the metropolitan of Marou to send to the said king two priests, and two deacons, provided with consecrated vessels to baptize all who were willing to be converted, and teach them the rites of Christianity, and ordered that he should prescribe to them abstinence from meat during Lent, but permit the use of milk, since they stated that they had no other food."

* "Tibi Domine Universarum," &c. This prayer was composed by St. Simeon Archbishop of Seleucia, and martyr. It may still be read in the Chaldee service.—Assemani. Bibl. Orient. vol. iii. part ii. p. 486.

† Chron. Sy. vol. ii. p. 445.

‡ He occupied the pontifical seat at Bagdad from 1001–1012.

Though it may not be possible to assign the causes which brought to a knowledge of the Gospel these numerous populations of High Asia, it is certain that the nation of the Kéraites was converted to Christianity in the first year of the eleventh century. On that point Oriental writers are unanimous.* The Nestorians, as we have more than once remarked, had, even in the preceding ages, propagated the Christian faith amongst the tribes of Tartary. But this splendid conversion of a powerful sovereign, who solemnly received baptism with two hundred thousand of his subjects, was an event that must have created a wonderful sensation in the Christian world. The Nestorians never failed to publish, throughout Asia, their valuable conversions, and to exaggerate greatly their importance, with the design of forwarding their propagandism.

Travellers listened to these narratives, added to them a thousand marvels of their own, and then hawked these stories about in their long peregrinations. Such was, in all probability, the origin of the story of Prester John and his Christian Empire, which for above three centuries excited so powerfully the minds of both Eastern and Western nations.

The Kéraite people kept for a long time the Christian faith which had been imparted to them; their power went on meanwhile increasing prodigiously, and the important part which they played in the great revolutions by which Asia was convulsed, appears to justify, in some measure, the brilliant renown of the kingdom of Prester John.

In 1046, that is, forty-five years after the conversion of the king of the Kéraites, one of his successors subjugated several neighbouring tribes, and led his victorious armies to Khakhgar. The name of Tartar began then to be repeated among the Asiatic nations, and to carry with it a secret terror. The metropolitan Bishop of Samarkand, finding himself at a little distance from the theatre of war, forwarded a dispatch to the

* See d'Ohsson's History of the Mongols, vol. i. p. 48.

Nestorian Catholicos,* to inform him of the overwhelming march of the Tartar Kéraites, and his letter was read, even in the palace of the Kaliph of Bagdad, in the presence of the Arab chiefs.

"A people,"† said the metropolitan of Samarkand, "innumerable as grasshoppers, has opened for itself a passage across the mountains which separate Thibet from Choutan, where, according to ancient historians, are to be found the gates constructed by Alexander the Great. Thence they have penetrated to Kaschgar. There are seven kings, each of whom is at the head of seven hundred thousand horsemen. The first of these is named Nazarath; that is to say, 'Chief, by order of God.' They have brown complexions, like Indians. They do not wash their faces, nor cut their hair, but plait it, and tie it together at the top of their heads, in the form of a tiara, which serves them instead of a helmet. They are excellent archers. Their food is simple, and not very abundant. They practise, above all things, justice and humanity. Their horses eat flesh meat."

At these words there arose a great noise in the assembly. An Arab chief stood up and said that the letter was not worthy of credit, since it contained an incredible circumstance; but another replied that he had himself had an Arab horse, which he fed habitually with beef and mutton, and that, consequently, there was no reason to doubt what the metropolitan of Samarkand had asserted.‡

The progress of these Tartar Kéraites towards the Western regions of Asia, was only the prelude to their future aggrandisement, and enormous conquests. The Christian element, which continued to penetrate more and more this rough and energetic race, seemed to communicate to it an expansive

* This Catholicos had then his seat at Bagdad.

† Aboulfarage, Chron. Syr. dans Assemani, vol. iii. part ii. ch. ix. p. 488.

‡ During our long journey from Pekin to Lha-Ssa, the capital of Thibet, we ourselves saw a horse devouring, with excellent appetite, slices of camel's flesh.

force that nothing could resist—not even the enthusiastic ardour of Islâm. In the middle of the twelfth century, one of these Kéraite kings, also designated by the name of Prester John, after having prosecuted a furious war against the sovereigns of Persia and Medea, took, by assault, Ecbatana, the capital of two empires, and pursued, like a torrent, his devastating march, until he planted his camp on the banks of the Tigris. He was preparing to carry his victorious and indefatigable battalions across the river, and come to the assistance of the Christians of Syria and Palestine, when suddenly he seemed to be arrested by some mysterious obstacle, checked his course, and led his powerful and victorious army back into the arid and sandy deserts of Tartary.* It is to this prince the pompous letters addressed to the Pope Alexander III., the King of France, and the Emperor, are generally attributed.

Ung-Khan was the last sovereign who governed the nation of the Kéraites. After having increased and strengthened the power bequeathed to him by his predecessors, he exercised an uncontested supremacy over the numerous hordes of Tartary; but he subsequently found himself brought into collision with a formidable chief named Temoutchin; and the two perceiving that their rivalry would be injurious or fatal to both, formed an alliance, cemented by the ceremony of drinking from a cup of fermented mare's milk, in which they had both mingled their blood. Their friendship, nevertheless, was not eternal, as had been mutually promised, and they did not continue to share "the sweet and the bitter."† In fact, there arose between them a long and obstinate contest, and they finally prepared for a great battle. The two armies were in presence of each other, and preparing for an engagement, when Temoutchin called together the soothsayers who always

* Ottoni's Chron. ch. xxxiii. p. 146.; Alberni Chron. pp. 307–8.

† When two Tartars form an alliance, they reciprocally promise to share "the sweet and the bitter."

accompanied him in his wars, and demanded of them what would be the result of the decisive struggle.

The soothsayers took a bamboo cane, split it into two halves, wrote the name of Temoutchin on one, and that of Ung-Khan on the other, and flung them into the midst of the assembly. After this they chanted some magic prayers, and soon the two fragments of wood, it is related,* set themselves in motion, and began a kind of combat, the vicissitudes of which the Tartar chiefs watched with intense anxiety.

At length the bamboo of Temoutchin succeeded in placing itself across that of Ung-Khan, and paralysing its movements. This circumstance, continues Marco Polo, was of good augury for the troops of Temoutchin, who, therefore, advanced full of confidence and courage against the Kéraites, and Ung-Khan was routed, and had his head cut off by one of Temoutchin's officers. Thus vanished, in 1203, the kingdom of Prester John and the power of the Kéraites. The principal Tartar chiefs, as is well known, have always borne, and still bear, the title of Khan; and this word being somewhat difficult to pronounce from the guttural effort it requires, was found rather troublesome by Western travellers who wished to speak of their relations with the Chief of the Tartars. They wrote by turns Chan, Caan, Ghan, Gehan, and finally John; and the last mode of rendering the rough Tartar sound pleased them all the better, because it seemed, in the Middle Ages, quite natural to designate by the name of an Apostle a sovereign recently converted to Christianity. All the Khans of the Kéraites, of course, bore the same title, and this seems to explain the astonishing longevity of this eternal Prester John, whom all European travellers in Asia never failed to meet with for at least two centuries.

It is not credible that these princes should have been really

* Voyages de Marco Polo, published by the Société de la Géographie, ch. lIII p. 849.

invested with the sacerdotal character, as the title of Priest would seem to indicate; and it was probably only attributed to them from its being a common practice with Oriental monarchs, to unite in their own persons the temporal and spiritual authorities, and to be at the same time the political and religious head of their nation. Asia has always been the country of royal priests; and it is not uncommon for these sovereigns to denominate themselves "Sons of Heaven;" and in this quality not only to regulate religious affairs, and settle points of belief, but also to appoint the Tutelary Genii for provinces, towns, rivers, mountains, and forests. The Kéraite Khans having embraced Christianity, it seems likely that, to accommodate themselves to Asiatic practices, they should adopt the sacerdotal dignity as a title of honour;—indeed, from that curious epistle of Prester John to the Emperor of Constantinople, it would appear that his whole court had received an ecclesiastical organisation, and that attendants, cupbearers, and grooms were decorated with the titles of Abbés, Bishops, and Archbishops. It is remarkable, too, that it was about the same epoch that the Lama hierarchy, and the theocratic government of the Talé-Lana, was formed in Thibet. We shall in the sequel have occasion to revert to this extraordinary fact, which we think cannot reasonably be attributed to anything else than to the influence of the Nestorianism propagated in Upper Asia.

From all this it seems fair to conclude that this renowned Prester John was no other than the Khan of the Kéraite Tartars, amongst whom the Nestorian missions remained very flourishing up to the commencement of the thirteenth century; and in whose country we shall find traces of Christianity at a later period. The great conqueror Temoutchin having dispersed and absorbed the nation of the Kéraites, the kingdom of Prester John disappeared, and existed no more, except in the imaginations of Europeans. The travellers from the West, during the Middle Ages, continued, nevertheless, to

seek for this remarkable potentate with eager curiosity, and whenever they met with a prince professing Christianity, though it might be in India or Abyssinia, never failed to declare they had found Prester John.

CHAPTER IV.

A French Missionary in Tartary. — Tchinquiz-Khan proclaimed Sovereign of the Tartars. — Character of this famous conqueror. — His conquests. — His death. — His religious faith. — Election of his successor. — Tartar invasion of Georgia. — Of Armenia. — Gregory IX. and the Queen Rhouzoudan. — Invasion of Poland. — Saint Hyacinth. — Battle of Liegnitz. — Ravages of the Mongols in Poland and Russia. — Frederic Barbarossa. — St. Louis and Queen Blanche. — Bela IV. King of Hungary. — Adventures of the Canon of Varadin. — Gregory IX. preaches a Crusade against the Tartars. — Gregory IX. and Frederic Barbarossa. — Religion of the Mongol Tartars. — Innocent IV. at the Council-General of Lyons — Decree that Missionary Ambassadors shall be sent to the Tartars.

A FEW years ago, a French missionary was following across the Steppes of Tartary a Mongol caravan, which was conducting a long string of camels, laden with Chinese merchandise, to Kiakta, on the frontiers of Siberia. One day the caravan stopped in a vast plain, not far from the source of the Onan, one of the great tributaries of the river Amour. The place of encampment chosen by these nomadic herdsmen was an immense prairie, which, as the wind swept over the high grass that covered it, resembled a wide sea. The horison was bounded in all directions by a girdle of mountains of a yellowish tint, whose summits were covered by eternal snows, then glittering in the rays of the sun.

A little before dark, the Mongols brought back their numerous camels from the pasture. They made them lie down, side by side, so as to form a kind of wall round the encampment.

Then, according to custom, they set to work to prepare the evening meal of tea, into which they put, by way of rendering it more substantial, slices of fat sheep's tail or camel's hump, as well as butter and salt. Whilst the company were waiting until this Tartar soup had undergone its rather lengthy preparation, they were smoking Chinese tobacco, and abandoning themselves to the pleasure of one of those interminable gossips, in which the children of the desert so much delight.

"My brother," said the chief of the caravan, addressing the French missionary, "these fine pastures, those lofty mountains that surround them, those sources of the river Onan, where we have watered our camels,—all this country is, for us, full of glorious and holy recollections. Here was the cradle of the Mongol power. Our learned Lamas love to relate to us how our ancestors, who were at first but a feeble tribe, became the masters of the world, and subjugated nations whose very names are unknown to us. In those ancient times, all Mongols were warriors, and their number was countless. Now, as you see, my brother, you meet nothing in all directions but immense solitudes, and the descendants of Thinguiz and Timour are become wandering herdsmen."

The chief was not able to do justice in his description to the epic grandeur of the gigantic wars of his forefathers, and he had but a confused idea of the former power of his nation; but it was perfectly true that on this very spot, where the Mongols were now lying indolently round their fire of *argols*,* smoking their long pipes, whilst their camels peaceably ruminated the grass of the desert, there would have been seen, six hundred years ago, hosts of men of the same race, restless, daring, impetuous warriors, breathing only battle, and planning the conquest of the whole world.

It was in the spring of the year 1206, that Temoutchin, after the death of Ung-Khan, and the destruction of the king-

* The dried dung of animals, used for fuel in Tartary.

dom of the Kéraites, convoked a *Kouriltai*, or general assembly of the chiefs of all the hordes. The meeting was to take place near the source of the Onan, and on the day fixed for this "*Champ de Mai*," a multitude of tents, with streamers of various colours floating above them, to indicate the tribe they belonged to, were seen pitched upon the plain; and behind each were ranged numerous squadrons of Tartar horsemen. Fierce impetuous looking warriors were galloping to and fro, calling to one another in the guttural tones of their rude language; and the strangeness of their costume, their hardy and ferocious aspect, and everything about the assembly, bore the character of indomitable barbarism. In the midst of the camp was a standard formed of a long pike, to which were attached seven white yak's tails,* one above another.

As soon as Temoutchin, the supreme chief of these half savage tribes, made his appearance, the assembly was hushed into profound silence. Temoutchin was at this time forty-four years of age; the habit of absolute command, and the practice of the fiercest battles, had given to his swarthy countenance a haughty, stern, and pitiless expression. An iron will, and a body fitted to be its instrument, inured to long privations and hardships, and of massive squareness in its proportions, excited the admiration of his companions in arms. Temoutchin was certainly endowed with superior intelligence, but it was his athletic person that chiefly won their respect. These barbarous hordes which he swayed at his pleasure, saw in him the representative of brute force, and material power.

The *Toolholos*, or Mongol bards, who had already begun to celebrate his exploits, said little of the military genius of the

* These standards are called *tou* by the Chinese; and, doubtless, it is from them that the name of the Turkish standard, the "*toug*," has been derived. "It is," says Cuvier, "with the tail of the yak, a kind of small buffalo, with a long-haired tail, like that of the horse,—itself a native of the mountains of Thibet,—that those standards were first made which are still in use among the Turks."—"Regne Animal," vol. i. p. 270.

great warrior, but vaunted in their songs the loudness of his voice, which sounded like thunder in the mountains, and the strength of his hands, like the paws of a bear, which could break a man in two, as easily as an arrow. They told how, when he lay down at night, near a fire made of the trunks of great trees, that he hardly felt the sparks and burning brands that fell upon his body, but took them for the stings of insects. Such was the man who presided over this meeting of Mongol chiefs.

He took his place on a sort of throne, covered with the skins of tigers and foxes, as if to indicate the cunning and cruelty that were to distinguish the conquests of the Tartar army; and then an old man advanced, clothed in long yellow robes, and whose countenance was full of enthusiasm. This was a renowned soothsayer, known by the name of *Bout-Tengri*, that is, the "image of God." He never spoke but by the inspiration of Hormoustha and all his words were regarded as oracles. This personage now began a solemn oration, and addressing Temoutchin told him, that, after having vanquished and destroyed several sovereigns, who had borne the title of *Gour-Khan*,* that is, Khan-General, or universal, it did not become him to adopt the same qualification, since its glory was for ever tarnished; but that Heaven ordered him to take the title of *Tchinguiz-Khan*,† or "Khan of the Strong." No sooner had Bout-Tengri ceased, than an immense clamour arose from the camp, and the whole multitude of Tartars cried out with one voice, "Ten thousand years of life to Tchinguiz-Khan."

Tchinguiz-Khan, the "Sovereign of the Strong," was formerly but the chief of some very poor tribes, wandering about with their flocks under the most rigorous climate and in the most elevated regions of Tartary, namely, to the south-east of Lake

* The word *gour*, in Mongol, conveys the idea of totality.

† *Tchink*, in Mongol, signifies strong or firm, and the particle *guiz* is the plural inflection.

Barkal, where the rivers Onan, Keroulan, and Toula, take their rise. A few years sufficed for him to collect under one banner a crowd of the ferocious and turbulent hordes, whom he let loose to ravage the earth. Tchinguiz owed his success to the strength of his will, the resources of his genius, and the employment of every stratagem that could further his ends. Cunning and perfidy were always ready to second his warlike efforts; never did conqueror carry further his contempt for humanity, never had ambitious chief an army more adapted to execute his designs. Made up of nomadic hordes, who at all times led the lives of soldiers—who carried with them all the homes they had—who could subsist wherever their cattle and their horses could find pasture; it was no less superior to the troops of other nations by its warlike habits and the rapidity of its movements, than by the stern discipline that Tchinguiz-Khan had introduced into it.

It was with these Mongol hordes that Tchinguiz-Khan successively subjected all the nations of Tartary, and annihilated empires, "as you might tear up grass."* Far from paying homage at that time to the sovereigns of Northern China, to whom the Tartar tribes had before been tributary, he rushed down upon the empire at the head of a numerous body of his horsemen, and carried his devastations to the banks of the Yellow River.

Master of an immense booty, he then quitted China, but it was only to fly to other conquests. Central Asia was subjected to his laws; he desolated Trans-Oxiana, Khorassan, and Persia, and whilst his armies were on one side ravaging the Chinese empire, on the other they were sacking the country of Sinde and the banks of the Euphrates, penetrating through Georgia to the northern shores of the Black Sea, pouring over the Crimea, laying waste a part of Russia, and attacking the Bul-

* "Since the commencement of the world no nation has ever been as powerful as the Mongols are at present. They annihilate empires as one tears up grass. Why does heaven permit that?"—Toung-Kien-Kan Mou, "Annals of China."

garians on the Upper Wolga. The destructive progress of the Mongols among the nations of Western Asia, spread terror even to Byzantium. The Emperor John Ducas reinforced all his garrisons; and his subjects, terrified by the rumours of the atrocities committed by the Tartars, believed that these conquerors had the heads of dogs, and that they fed upon human flesh.*

The dread inspired by the ferocious soldiers of Tchinguiz-Khan was only too much justified by the horrible excesses of which they were really guilty towards the vanquished. The towns taken by assault were treated with incredible ferocity, especially when the Mongols had experienced a long resistance. Nischabour, the capital of Khorassan, under the monarchy of the Chosroes, having been taken, the Mongols massacred every living thing they found in the town, to the very dogs and cats.

The carnage lasted four days; and *Touloui*, the son of Tchinguiz-Khan, having heard that in the sack of Merou many of the inhabitants had saved their lives by lying down amongst the dead, ordered that the heads should be cut off from all the victims of his fury. Immense pyramids were constructed, in which were separately piled up the heads of men, of women, and of children, and in fifteen days, every vestige of the city was destroyed, and barley was sown upon its site.†

When towns surrendered at discretion, they were treated with somewhat less barbarity. Arab historians relate, that during the siege of Bokhara, a deputation, composed of Imaums and notables of the city, came out to meet Tchinguiz-Khan, and offer him homage and submission. The Mongol entered the town, and passing before the grand Mosque, rode in on horseback, asking whether that was the palace of the Sultan. "No," they replied, "it is the house of God." The conqueror then alighted at the foot of the altar, and mounting

* Pachimeres, vol. i. p. 87. Stritter's "Memoriæ Populorum," vol. iii. p. 1028.
† "Tarikh-Djihankuschai," vol. i.

two or three steps, called out with a loud voice, "the country is laid waste, bring us fodder for our horses." All the corn in the magazines of the town was immediately brought, the chests containing the Koran were carried into the court of the temple by the Mongols to serve for horse-troughs, and the sacred books of the Mussulmans were trampled under the hoofs of their horses. The barbarians deposited their wine-skins in the midst of the mosques, sent for the merry-andrews and singing girls of the town, making the walls ring with the roar of their brutal revelry; and while giving themselves up to every debauchery, the principal inhabitants of the town, the doctors of law, and the chief religious persons, were obliged to wait upon them as slaves, and tend their horses.

After some hours, Tchinguiz-Khan left the town, and went to a place called the Field of Prayer, to which the inhabitants were accustomed to resort on certain days of solemn religious festival. They were now assembled on this spot by order of their ruthless invader. He ascended a kind of pulpit that stood there, and demanded who were the richest persons of the place. They were pointed out to him, to the number of two hundred and eighty, and he then called them, and addressed them. After having mentioned the acts of hostility that had induced him to take arms against their Sultan, he said to them, "Know that you have committed great faults, and the chiefs of the people are the most criminal. If you ask me how I know this, I reply, that I am the 'Scourge of God;' and that if you were not very guilty, he would not have hurled me at you."*

He was indeed a terrible and inevitable scourge. Without pity or mercy for the unfortunate victims of his wars, he seemed actually to delight in carnage and devastation. One day, the fierce barbarian asked Bourgoul, one of his principal generals, what was, in his opinion, the greatest pleasure of

* D'Ohsson, vol. i. p. 281.

man. "To go hunting," was the reply, "on a spring day, mounted on a fine horse, and holding a falcon on your fist, to see him bring down his prey." "No," said Tchinguiz-Khan, "the greatest enjoyment of man is, to conquer his enemies, to drive them before him, to snatch from them all that they possess, to see the persons dear to them with their faces bathed in tears, to mount their horses, and carry away captive their daughters and their wives."*

Death came at last to this ravager of nations, and at the moment when he was preparing to lay waste the kingdom of Tangout. He expired, after a week's illness, on the 18th of August, 1227, at the age of sixty-six, and in the twenty-second year of his reign. Before he died, he recommended his sons to finish the conquest of the world. "My children," said he, "I have raised an empire so vast, that from the centre to one of its extremities is a year's journey. If you wish to preserve it, remain united."

Tchinguiz-Khan, even after his death, seemed still to preside over carnage and destruction. His body was secretly transported to Mongolia; and to prevent the news of his decease from spreading, the troops that accompanied his coffin† killed every individual they met on that long journey.

It was not until the procession had reached the great Ordou, the ancient territory of Tchinguiz-Khan, near the source of the Keroulan, that his death was publicly made known. After the funeral ceremonies, in which an immense number of men

* D'Ohsson, "Hist. of the Mongols," vol. i. p. 404.

† "When the body of this great Khan was transported to the place of burial, the convoy killed every one they met on the way, saying, 'Go and serve our lord and master in another world.' For they are so possessed by a demon, that they believe the persons killed in this way go and serve the deceased king. Their fury extended itself even to the horses they found on the roads; they cut their throats in order that they too might serve the Khan. It is said that when the body of Mangou-Khan was carried to the mountains to be buried, the soldiers who bore it killed in this way more than 20,000 men."—"Voyage de Marco Polo, édition de Bergeron," vol. i. ch. 3. p. 54.

and horses were immolated,* the coffin was buried in one of the mountains that form the chain of Borkan-Caldoun, whence issue the rivers Onan, Keroulan, and Toula.

The Mongol historians relate, that one day, when Tchinguiz-Khan was hunting in this region, he lay down to rest himself under the shade of a large tree. After remaining there a few minutes, seemingly in profound thought, he said that it was there he would wish to be buried, and his sons, being informed of the circumstance, ordered that the interment should take place in that spot. Some time afterwards, it is added, the ground became covered with a thick forest, so that the particular tree beneath which the remains of Tchinguiz-Khan had been deposited, could no longer be recognised; "and this is the fruit of so many victories!" The furious conqueror, who thought to get possession of all the kingdoms of the earth, has not kept so much as a tomb in his own country.

History has left us little information concerning the religion of Tchinguiz Khan, probably because that was a matter in which he had small concern himself. It is known that in the armies, and among the nations subject to him, there were idolaters, Mahomedans, and Christians, and it is even said that one of his wives, a Kéraite by birth, and the niece of Ung-Khan, had been baptized. Tchinguiz-Khan himself, however, was neither Christian, Mahomedan, nor even idolater. He protected one religion no more than the other, and favored each in turn, as suited the interests of his policy. He strongly recommended his successors to give no preference to any, but desired that the priests of the various faiths should be exempt from taxes and contributions.

He seems to have believed in a supreme being, but that it mattered little in what way he was worshipped; so that his religion may be called Deism.

* This atrocious custom existed for a long time in Tartary, but at present it is extremely rare. Only on the graves of persons of rank horses are sacrificed. See "Souvenirs d'un Voyage en Tartarie à Thibet."

On some public occasions, he is known to have prayed publicly, and implored the protection of the Divinity, and it is related, that when the Sultan Mohammed put to death some Mongol ambassador in Turkestan, Tchinguiz-Khan, on receiving the intelligence, not only shed tears of indignation, but went to the summit of a mountain, where, prostrate on the ground, with his head uncovered, his face to the earth, and his girdle round his neck, he passed three days and nights in prayer and mortification. In his dealings with foreign nations, he liked to appeal to the Divinity; and when he attacked a country, and desired that it should surrender, and pay him homage, his very concise summons was concluded by these words:—"If you do not submit, how do we know what will happen? God alone knows that."*

But whatever may have been the religious faith of Tchinguiz-Khan, a matter not very easy to determine, it is certain that he was very tolerant, and left his subjects to profess freely whatever faith pleased them best, from Christianity down to the grossest and most absurd superstitions. His successors inherited this indifference, and we shall see how faithful they were to the recommendation of the famous founder of the Mongol power, to tolerate all religions, and show no preference for any.

After rendering the last honors to Tchinguiz-Khan, the princes of his family, and the chiefs of his army, and of the various hordes, separated, to return to their cantonments; it was only after the lapse of two years, and in the fear of the evil that might result from a longer interregnum, that they agreed to assemble, and elect a sovereign.

In the spring of the year 1229, the chiefs and generals came from all parts of the Tartar empire, to the great horde on the banks of the Keroulan.

* "Tarikh Djihankuschai," vol. I.

† Dgoutchi, the eldest son of Tchinguiz-Khan, had died some years before, but his descendants reigned for several centuries over a vast empire north of the Caspian and Black Seas, that counted Russia among its tributaries.

These ferocious ravagers of nations had at their head, the three sons of Tchinguiz-Khan, Ogotai, Tchagatai, and Touloui.* The latter had been charged to undertake the regency, until the election of a new sovereign.

Three days after, the first meeting of the Kouriltai were passed in festivity and pleasure, and then the members of this numerous assembly began to deliberate concerning the choice of an emperor. Many voices declared for Touloui, but he himself proclaimed in full council, that Tchinguiz-Khan had appointed his brother Ogotai to be his successor, and that the will of his father must be obeyed. Ogotai, on his side, made the most generous exertions to get Touloui invested with the sovereign authority, but the princes cried out with one voice, "Tchinguiz-Khan chose thee to be his successor, and how can we disobey his will?"*

Then Touloui presented him the cup, and at the same moment all the members of the Kouriltai, with their heads uncovered, and their girdles flung over their shoulders, bent the knee nine times before Ogotai, and saluted him with the title of Kha-kan, which subsequently served to designate the sovereign prince of the three other branches of Tchinguiz-Khan's family, of which the chiefs only took the title of Khan.

Before dispersing itself, the Kouriltai fixed the centre of the Tartar dominion definitively at Kara-Koroun, an ancient town of the Kéraites, between the Orgon and the Selinga, in nearly the same latitude as Paris.

This great Mongol empire, which had nearly absorbed the whole known world, was from this time completely constituted. It had been created by one man, the unknown chief of a nomadic tribe, in less time than is usually required to

* D'Ohsson, "Hist. des Mongols," vol. ii. p. 11. In raising Ogotai to the throne, the members of the family swore to remain faithful to his descendants in the following curious expressions:—"We swear that whilst there shall remain of thy posterity but a piece of flesh, such as if thrown on the grass would hinder an ox from grazing it, which if put into the fat would prevent the dogs from taking it,—we will not place on the throne the princes of any other branch."

found and people a single city. Never before, from a beginning so insignificant, did power rise in so short a time to such a gigantic height.

We have thought it necessary to dwell a little on the origin and progress of the Mongol supremacy in Upper Asia, in order to render more intelligible the political and religious relations of the sovereign pontiffs, Christian princes, and more especially of the kings of France, with the successors of Tchinguiz-Khan, in the thirteenth century. Europe and Asia were then convulsed by tremendous wars, which seemed in a measure to bring all empires into what we may call a state of fusion. There is nothing in the annals of the human race to be compared with the sudden and sweeping revolutions of that period, by which nations were often brought together, who had been previously almost ignorant of each other's existence, and separated by the entire breadth of our continent. We must be acquainted with these events, in order to appreciate their influence on the propagation of the Christian faith in Upper Asia, and on the progress of European civilisation.

As early as 1221, six years before the death of Tchinguiz-Khan, two Tartar generals, who had received orders to proceed to the conquest of Media, attacked the Georgians as they passed, but obtained no very decisive advantage over them. It was under these circumstances that Christians saw the Mongols for the first time, and fought against them. In the following year, the Tartar generals led their troops across the Caucasus mountains, and entered the country of some tribes of nomadic Turks, called Kiptchacs, an immense plain, extending along the north of the Black Sea, from the mouths of the Danube to those of the Jaik. On the news of the unexpected invasion of the Mongols, the occupants withdrew towards the extremity of their territory, but the Mongols pursued them, routed them in various encounters, and finally penetrated into Russia, where they met with no resistance. At the approach of these barbarians, the inhabitants of Novo-

gorod, being quite unable to resist, went out to meet them, bearing crosses, and imploring their mercy. The Tartars slaughtered them all, to the number of ten thousand; they then carried fire and sword over the whole of Southern Russia, and the banks of the Dnieper, and then proceeded to ravage the country round the Sea of Azoff, entered the Crimea, and took the opulent city of Soudac, belonging to the Genoese, who paid a tribute for it to the Turkish Kiptchacs; it was at this epoch a commercial depôt, between the countries north and south of the Black Sea.*

Georgia was at that period the most powerful country of the East, which had remained subject to Christian princes. It formed in some measure the advance post of Christianity against the formidable armies, which descended like avalanches from the lofty plateau of Central Asia, and its throne was at this time occupied by a Queen Rhouzoudan, while the Constable John commanded the military force of her kingdom. She was the first to utter a cry of alarm, and warn Christendom of the danger that threatened it. She sent an ambassador to Honorius the Third, to draw his attention to the storm which had long been gathering in the countries of the North, and which could not fail one day to burst over the very centre of Catholicism. This letter of the Georgian Queen has been preserved.† She states in it that she has not sent the help she had promised against the Saracens, because she had need of all the strength she could collect, to repulse a sudden invasion of barbarians. The Mongols, by an artifice of which the Georgians had been the dupes, had presented themselves as Christians, placing in their front some priests, whom they had taken in the countries through which they had passed had carrying before their battalions the Cross as a standard.

The Georgians, deceived by this trick, had suffered themselves to be surprised, and had lost six thousand men. "But,"

* Michel Scherbatoff, "Hist. of Russia," vol. ii. pp. 509–521

† Odor Raynaldi, "Annales Eccl. Ann. 1224," p. 535.

continues the Queen, "as soon as we perceived they were not true Christians, we rose against them, killed twenty thousand of them, took many prisoners, and put the rest to flight." Rhouzoudan adds, that she has just learned that the emperor was about to go to Syria, to begin the war against the Saracens, that she rejoices at it, and will send to the help of the Christian armies the Constable John, and a considerable number of distinguished persons of her kingdom, who have taken the cross, and are only waiting for orders to fly to the defence of the Holy Sepulchre.

David, the Bishop of Ani, had been charged to carry this letter to Honorius the Third, and he brought also one from the Constable John, who, after holding language pretty nearly similar to that of the Queen of Georgia, begged the blessing of the sovereign pontiff and the help of his prayers, "in order to be able to fight the battles of the Lord."

The Pope replied to Rhouzoudan and the Constable to animate their courage, and give them information of the plans of the Emperor Frederick for the approaching crusade. He recommended that his letter should be publicly read, in order to excite the enthusiasm of the people, and induce them to enlist in the holy war.

What a grand and beautiful mission was that of the Papacy in the Middle Ages, in the midst of the general confusion, in which so many young Christian nations were seeking to free themselves from their pagan institutions! To enlighten them with the torch of faith, to soften the asperity of their manners, to draw gently the worst of vices from their hearts, and the most fatal errors from their intellects; then to defend the weak against the strong, to struggle against tyrants and oppressors, to preach crusades, to call kings and nations to arms, to repulse the invasions of infidels and barbarians, such was the magnificent part assigned to this marvellous institution, which, in a purely human point of view, has never had anything comparable to it in the world. The sovereign pon-

tiff was, at the same time, the teacher, protector, civiliser, in a word, the Father of the great Christian family, and from the most distant regions, nations had recourse to him for consolation, for encouragement, for counsel.

We shall shortly see him with his anxious glances directed towards Central Asia, enrolling by turns soldiers and missionaries, to overcome the fierce Tartars, and then to convert them, and make them children of the Church and of God.

The apparition of the Tartars in Georgia had been but transitory, and as Queen Rhouzoudan also had announced that she had repulsed their attack, little more was thought of news that did not seem of much importance. Then came the death of Tchinguiz-Khan, which changed the course of events, and gave the Christians still some breathing time; but when Ogotai, his successor, had annexed to the Mongol empire the whole of China, as far as the Blue River, he raised an army of a million and a half of men, with the purpose of carrying on his operations at the same time, at the two extremities of Asia.

Thus the peace which appeared to reign in remote Asia became fatal to Europe. Batou, the son of Djoutihi, was the principal chief of the formidable expedition now preparing; and with him were associated several other generals and princes of the blood of Tchinguiz-Khan. The Mongol army, after subjugating the Coumans* and Bulgarians, entered Russia, and took Moscow, and the principal towns of what are now the governments of Vladimir and Jeroslaw; and the Grand Dukes of Russia then became the tributaries of the Grand Khan of the Tartars.

At the same time, another army of Mongols, accompanied by their wives and children, advanced towards Georgia and Armenia, under the conduct of Tcharmagen, and seventeen other generals. According to the laws established by Tchin-

* The country beyond the Kuban was often called Coumania.

guiz-Khan, they had orders to treat well the princes and nations who should submit at once, deliver up their towns, and consent to pay tribute. Others were to be abandoned to the fury of the soldiers. The inhabitants of towns were to be massacred without distinction of age or sex, and not even the animals were to be spared.

In the beginning of their career, nothing like negotiation with the Tartars was possible; the only choice was to acknowledge their empire, or die, and the peril of resistance was attested by the innumerable pyramids of human bones, which they raised on the sites of ruined towns. Long afterwards, travellers contemplated them with horror in regions now become desert, but which had seen the passage of these terrific barbarians.

In 1235 and 1236, the Mongols burnt and ravaged many of the towns of Albania, Georgia, and Great Armenia. Many of the Armenian princes, finding it impossible to oppose effectual resistance to these formidable invaders, took the resolution of submitting to them, and serving in their armies. Sometimes they even undertook the journey to Kara-Koroum, in order to demand of the Kha-kan himself, reparation for injuries inflicted by his generals; and several of them did really obtain by this means the restitution of their states, so that the imperial horde became like the Rome of former days, the supreme tribunal, where the claims of kings were adjudged.*

The pride and strength of character of the Queen of Georgia did not permit her to follow the example of her vassals. Instead of submitting to the Tartars, she continued to write urgent letters to the West, to ask for help; and one, addressed to Pope Gregory the Ninth, who then occupied the pontifical throne, has been preserved. The Queen asks for a Christian army to repulse the attacks of the Mongols; and in

* "Mémoires d'Abel Remusat," p. 12.

order to interest the Pope more in her cause, professes entire submission to the Church of Rome, and promises to unite Georgia to it in Catholic unity.

Gregory the Ninth replies, that he mourns deeply for the evils suffered by Georgia, but that it is out of his power to send any help to it at present, since the Emperor, Frederick the Second, had just raised a tempest within the Church, and that it has also been attacked in all directions, in Syria by the Saracens, in Spain by the Moors, in Italy and Germany by false Christians, that is to say, partisans of the emperor. He praises the Queen for her intention of bringing back Georgia to the unity of the Faith; and in order to favor this pious design, he will send her some monks of the order of St. Dominic, to evangelise the country. Rhouzoudan would have greatly preferred his sending her soldiers, and she appears in the sequel to have attached but little value to the Holy Father's spiritual consolations, as she renounced Christianity, and became a Mahometan.*

Whilst the Mongols were thus keeping Georgia in terror of their arms, they were menacing the North still more alarmingly for the Christians. After having sacked the southern part of Russia, they marched in 1240 upon Kiew, a town which, for three centuries, had been the metropolis of Russia, and which its commerce with the empire of Byzantium, with the Dnieper, and the Black Sea, rendered very flourishing. It was soon invested by the Tartars, but the inhabitants trusted to the deep waters of the river Dnieper for opposing an insurmountable barrier to the Tartar cavalry. They were deceived, however. These barbarians had no need of bridges or boats to cross rivers; they constructed, according to their practice, with boughs of trees, covered with hides, a kind of portmanteau, in which they packed their baggage; they then placed themselves astride of this extempore contrivance, fastened it to

* Aboulfarage.

the tail of their horses, and thus, making use of their bows for oars, the whole army crossed the river without accident; for horses, as well as men, had great experience in this kind of navigation. The metropolis of Russia was then soon in the hands of the Mongols, who, according to custom, massacred the inhabitants, and burnt their town.*

There was at Kiew, at the period of the Tartar invasion, a monk celebrated for his apostolic labors, named Hyacinth, a nephew of Yves of Kouski, Bishop of Cracow. After having received at Rome, from the hands of St. Dominic, the habit of the preaching Brothers, he returned to Poland, and revived the faith among his own countrymen, and he afterwards proceeded, with indefatigable zeal, to combat the remains of idolatry in Prussia, Pomerania, Denmark, Sweden, Gothland, and Norway, as well as in Russia, *Black*, and *Red*, the Greek Archipelago, and among the Coumans. This apostle, whose astonishing zeal embraced all Asia, subsequently traversed Tartary and Thibet, and even penetrated to China, whence he returned to Poland, marking every day by a victory over paganism, Mussulman infidelity, heresy, and schism. Saint Hyacinth was at Kiew, in a Dominican convent, of which he was the founder, when the Mongol hordes, thirsting for blood and carnage, burst into the town. Whilst some of them were engaged in cutting the throats of the inhabitants, others were rushing about with flaming torches to set fire to the buildings, and soon every quarter of the city was enveloped in one vast conflagration, which glared frightfully on the heaps of dead bodies, and streams of blood. Before the fire could reach the Dominican convent, Saint Hyacinth, clothed in his sacerdotal vestments, went to the chapel to withdraw the holy Elements

* It appears, according to the Greek historian Nicetas, that the Turks made use of nearly the same method for crossing rivers. "To pass the Danube, they filled a piece of leather with cork, and then closed it so that no drop of water could get in; then seating themselves upon it, and holding by the tail of their horses, and carrying at the same time their saddles and arms, they thus passed the waters of the broad Danube."—Nicetas, "Choniates Mem. Popul. ad Ann. 1164," vol. III. p. 929

from the profanation of the barbarians. He was anxiously bearing away from its tabernacle the treasure of the Eucharist, and was passing a statue of the Virgin, near the end of the church, when he thought he heard—according to the legend—a voice saying, Hyacinth, my son, are you going to abandon me to the insults of the wicked?

The holy saint cast a tender and mournful look towards the statue, which was of alabaster, and of considerable weight, when the same voice said, "Hyacinth, Hyacinth, do not forsake me; be of good courage, you shall have strength enough to save both Son and Mother."

The generous servant of God, listening only to his zeal and his piety, flung his arms round the statue, raised it with facility, and bearing in the other hand the holy Pyx, issued from the town through the flames, and miraculously crossed the river Dnieper.* This same Virgin of Kiew was afterwards transported by the illustrious Thaumaturgus to Cracow, where the Poles honored it with a special devotion.

After the capture, and almost complete destruction of the metropolis of Russia, the Mongols advanced to Poland. In the year 1240, they ravaged the province of Lublin, and withdrew with their booty to Galicia. They returned, however, in the depth of winter, sacked Sandomir, and advanced, without meeting with any resistance, to within seven miles of Cracow. They then retired a second time, at the beginning of Lent 1241, laden with spoil, and driving before them, like cattle, a multitude of captives of both sexes, the very *élite* of the nation, tied one to another. Vladimir, the Palatine of Cracow, pursued them with some troops, attacked them, and in the first charge killed many; but the Mongols, having faced about, charged their assailants again with impetuosity, and put them to flight. This action was, however, favorable to the captives, who, finding means during the battle to break their chains, fled into the neighboring forests.†

* Fontana, "Monumenta Dominicana, Ann. 1241." † D'Ohsson, vol. ii. p. 124.

The Mongols did not long delay returning to Poland, with new strength, and furious at the resistance they had met with, and on both sides preparations were made for a decisive battle. Henry, Duke of Silesia, surnamed the Pious, the son of Henry the Bearded, and Saint Hedwig, soon found himself at the head of thirty thousand men, divided into five corps. The Mongols, commanded by their general, Baidar, were formed into an equal number of divisions, but each numerically stronger than that of their enemies.

The presence of the Tartars had excited the greatest enthusiasm and military ardor in the States of Poland, not unmingled, probably, with a considerable dread of the foe. The Poles were called on to contend with those who were enemies alike of their religion, their country, and their domestic homes, to defend at once their altars, hearths, and native soil. It was a crusade, a holy war, to which no one could possibly remain indifferent. Public prayers were offered up, priests exhorted the combatants in churches and camps; even Saint Hedwig, the mother of Duke Henry, was seen to issue from the convent in which she had devoted herself to a life of religious seclusion, and rush through the ranks of the soldiers, urging them to heroic exertions in the cause of Christianity and of Poland.

It is said that God had revealed to her that her son was to perish in this struggle, but that she had the fortitude to control the anguish by which her heart was rent; and this sublime mother was heard to say to Henry, at the moment when he was going into battle, that it was his part to set an example of valor, and that if God so willed it, he must die bravely, at the head of his army.

On the ninth of April, 1241, Duke Henry, the princes and Christian leaders, after having heard mass, and communicated, issued from Liegnitz to meet the foe, and the two armies confronted one another about a league from the town, in a plain watered by the Neiss, where was since built the village of

Wahlstadt. The crusaders had obtained from Duke Henry the favor of being allowed to commence the attack, and unfortunately they were deceived by a stratagem of the Mongol advanced guard, which feigned to give way, and pursued them.

When this ill-armed and half-naked infantry had been drawn to a sufficient distance from the main body, the Mongol cavalry surrounded them, and pierced them to death with their arrows.

The Polish army was entirely defeated. Prince Henry had a horse killed under him during the rout, and he had just mounted another, when he was surrounded by a squadron of the enemy, and while raising his lance to defend himself, he received a wound in the armpit, and was thrown down.

The Tartars cut off his head, and after having placed it on the point of a lance, presented themselves, armed with this bloody trophy, before the citadel of Liegnitz, and summoned it to surrender. The loss of the Poles was very considerable; it is said, that in order to make known the number of their enemies left dead on the field, the Mongols cut off an ear from each, and that they filled nine sacks with these barbarous tokens of their victory. The practice was common enough with them, and in Russia in 1239, when the Khan had given a similar order, they are said to have found themselves in possession of two hundred and seventy thousand human ears.

The town of Liegnitz having been delivered to the flames by the Christians themselves, the Mongols laid waste all the surrounding country, and then entered Moravia, marking their course by fire and blood, and advanced as far as the frontiers of Bohemia and Austria.

Vinceslas, the king of Bohemia, saw, with terror, the approach of the storm that threatened to burst over his country; and feeling little confidence in any force he could oppose to them, had taken the resolution to concentrate his strength within his fortresses, and to write to the neighboring princes

to urge them to form a coalition against the common enemy. In his letter to the Duke of Brabant, he says:—"A nation of ferocious savages, in countless numbers, is occupying our frontiers. The misfortunes predicted for the sins of men, in the Holy Scriptures, are overwhelming us on every side;" and after having painted, in the liveliest colors, the ravages exercised by the Tartars in the neighboring countries, he entreats his father-in-law to send him troops promptly, since he has been informed that the barbarians intend entering Bohemia, at the approaching festival of Easter (1241.)

"The people of both north and south," he says, in conclusion, "are so oppressed by calamity, that never, since the beginning of the world, were they so cruelly scourged."*

There was no exaggeration in this account. The very name of the Tartars made people shudder,† and the sight of them often produced the most painful effects. The sovereigns of Europe and Asia felt themselves tottering on their thrones, and they dispatched emissaries one to another to concert measures for resisting this formidable invasion.

The Emperor Frederick II. wrote a curious letter to the King of England, in which he takes occasion, with much self-complacency, to indulge his taste for rhetoric. The picture which he draws of the Tartars, however, is remarkable for truth and precision. "A people issuing from the utmost confines of the world, where they had long been hidden under a frightful climate, has suddenly and violently seized on the countries of the North, and multiplied there like grasshoppers. One knows not whence this savage race derives the name of Tartar, but it is not without a manifest judgment of God that they have been reserved for these latter times, as a chastisement for the sins of men, and, perhaps, for the destruction of Christendom.

* Odor Raynald, "Annal Eccl. ad Annum, 1241."

† "Toutes les gens de Orient en eurent si grand paour et si grand hide, que le seul nom des Tartres et la hideur de les oyr nommer par les villes et les chateaulx faisait les dames enchaintes abortir de peur et de hide."

"This ferocious and barbarous nation knows nothing of the laws of humanity. They have, however, a chief whom they venerate, and whose orders they blindly obey, calling him the God of the earth. These men are short, and thick set, but strong, hardy, of immovable firmness, and, at the least sign from their chief, rushing with impetuous valour into the midst of perils of every kind. They have broad faces, eyes set obliquely, and they utter the most frightful cries and yells, which correspond but too well with the feelings of their hearts. They have no other clothing than the hides of oxen, asses, and horses, and up to the present time, they have had no other armour than rough and ill-joined plates of iron.

"But already—and one cannot utter it without a groan—they are beginning to equip themselves better, from the spoils of Christians; and soon the wrath of God will perhaps permit us to be shamefully massacred with our own weapons. The Tartars are mounted on the finest horses, and they now feed on the most dainty viands, and dress richly, and with care. They are incomparable archers. They carry with them leathern bags, skilfully fashioned, with which they cross lakes and rapid rivers. It is said that their horses, when they have no other forage, will feed on the leaves, bark, and roots of trees, and that they are, notwithstanding, full of spirit, strength, and agility.*"

Whilst Frederick Barbarossa was sending this faithful portrait of the Tartars to Edward of England, all Europe was agitated and terrified at the rumour of this horrible barbarian invasion. Matthew Paris relates, that Queen Blanche, the mother of the King of France, and a lady of most venerable and pious character, burst into tears when she heard that the nations were menaced by this messenger of the wrath of Heaven, and sending for her son begged to know what he meant to do in this terrible conjuncture. "My dear son," she

* Matth. Paris, "Hist. Angl.," p. 820. Odor Raynald, "Annal. Eccl. ad Ann. 1241."

said, "what fearful rumours are these? Surely the irruption of these Tartars threatens our total ruin, and that of our Holy Church." King Louis replied, in a voice which, though sorrowful, had a tone of something divine in it, "Let us look to Heaven for support and consolation, mother; and if they come, these Tartars, we will drive them back into Tartary, whence they have issued; or it may be that they will send us to Heaven, to enjoy the bliss that has been promised to the elect."* These words, adds Matthew Paris, inspired both the nobility of France and of the neighbouring nations with confidence and courage.

The play upon words here attributed to St. Louis, is found in almost all the writings of the period, and is, perhaps, the real cause of the alteration which the Westerns have made in the name of the *Tartars*. They are frequently designated Tartares, from the first moment of their appearance; and *Tartari imo Tartarei*, as the Emperor Frederick calls them, was an expression that found much favour. It was, in fact, a very general opinion in Europe that the Mongols were demons, sent to chastise mankind, or at least that they held intercourse with demons; and this last supposition was strengthened by their having, or being said to have, the art of raising clouds of smoke and flame in the midst of battles.† This was an additional reason why recourse was often had to solemn prayer and fasts, in the hope of escaping the fearful scourge of their invasion.

The banner of the cross was now displayed, and all nations called on to unite in the defence of the Christian name. The country where the Tartar invasion raged with most implacable

* Matth. Paris, "Hist. Angl.," p. 747.

† "It has been customary to explain this fact by saying that the Tartars were in the habit of setting fire to the dry grass and the brushwood of the forests, as the natives of New Holland do. But in that case it would have been easy for the Christians to perceive the cause of the fires. It is more probable that the fires proceeded from some kind of artillery and inflammable powder, with which, it is certain from Chinese history, the Mongols of that epoch were acquainted."—A. Remusat.

fury was Hungary; a kingdom which, at that time, extended to the Adriatic, and which had been for five years under the rule of Bela IV. The Mongol general Batou had written to him, to demand his submission to the Mongol sovereign, if he wished to save his own life, or that of his subjects. The letter had been brought by an Englishman banished for life from his native country, and who had been taken into the service of the Tartars.

The Hungarian king Bela was a gentle and pious prince, but by no means a warrior, and he imagined he could arrest the course of the torrent that was precipitating itself upon his frontiers. He refused, therefore, to pay homage to the Mongols, but unfortunately neglected the precautions that his refusal rendered indispensable. His only measure of defence was, to send a handful of troops into the passes of the Carpathians, to guard them, and block each of them up with an abattis of felled trees. But the Tartars swept away such obstacles as these in a moment; Hungary was invaded at three points at once by fifty thousand men, and the whole country was soon in the power of the barbarians, who covered its cities and its fields with fire and blood. The people fled in horror and consternation, and great numbers took refuge in Varadin, one of the principal cities, which had a citadel defended by broad moats, and walls flanked with towers, though, unfortunately, only of wood. The Mongols captured it with great ease, pillaged it, set fire to it, and beheaded the whole population, without any distinction of age or sex. The ladies had taken refuge in the cathedral, and the Mongols would not give themselves the trouble to break open the doors, but set fire to it, and the unfortunate ladies all perished in the flames.

The barbarians profaned the churches by the most abominable debauchery, broke open the tombs, trampled the relics under their feet, polluted the sacred vessels, and put the Canons to torture, to make them reveal all that they possessed. The few inhabitants who had been left alive after the

first massacre, citizens, ecclesiastics, or soldiers, were hacked to death in the plain with sabres, and hatchets, and the ravages only ceased when the infection from the putrefying corpses forced the Tartars to leave the place, of which they had made a vast desert.

Roger, one of the canons of Varadin, has related the invasion and destruction of Hungary by the Tartars, in a production entitled, *Miserabile Carmen.*

The narrative of these deplorable events could, in fact, be nothing else than a song of lamentation.

This monk Roger had been an eyewitness and a victim of of the atrocities of the Mongols in his country, and for a long time, he says, "death would have been a consolation for him, and life was only a torment." This is what he tells us of his own adventures:—*

"Whilst the Tartars were sacking Varadin, I escaped by night into a fortified island, but not thinking myself safe there, I took refuge in a neighbouring forest. In the morning, the island was occupied by the Tartars, who killed all the people in it; my very hair stood up on hearing of these massacres, and a cold sweat, as of death, burst from me, when I thought of that army of murderers.

"I continued to wander about the woods, but I was starving with hunger, and was obliged to venture at night into the island, in order to search among the bodies for morsels of food or flour, which I secretly carried away. I lived thus for twenty days, hiding myself in caverns and ditches, and in the hollow trunks of trees.

"The Tartars then promised that they would do no harm to the inhabitants, who would come out of their concealment. I did not myself depend much on this promise, and my suspicions were but too just; but I thought it better to go at once to their camp, than to await my fate in a village, and I

* Rogerii "Miserabile Carmen," p. 293.

therefore, gave myself up to a Hungarian, who had gone into the service of the Tartars, and who deigned, as a great favour, to place me among the number of his servants. I was almost naked; but my business was to mind the waggons; and I had the fear of death continually before me, for I knew that in one night the Tartars had murdered the inhabitants of all the surrounding villages. Nevertheless, as the princes had received orders to return to Tartary, we began to move away with the herds of cattle, and horses, and waggons, laden with booty. The army retired slowly, and when it had quitted Hungary to enter Coumania, it was no longer allowed that any cattle should be killed for the use of the captives. The Tartars gave us only the intestines, heads, and hoofs of the animals they had eaten, and we heard from the interpreters that it was intended to kill us very soon. I began to consider, therefore, how I should escape from them, and, contriving to get away from the road they were following, I plunged into the forest followed by my servant. I crept into a grotto, and covered myself over with the branches of trees, and my servant hid himself also not far off. We remained thus, as in a tomb, for two days, not daring to lift our heads, and listening to the horrible voices of the Tartars, who were seeking their cattle in the woods. At length, being tormented by hunger, we issued from our retreat, but soon catching sight of a man, we took to flight again. He ran away too, however, and as we now saw that he was without arms, we made signs to each other that we should meet. We then both related our sad adventures, and deliberated as to what was best to be done. Being strengthened by our trust in God, we reached the extremity of the forest, and there mounted on a high tree to look about us.

"Oh, what a sorrow! The country was entirely desolated, and it was a desert that we should have to cross, with nothing but the steeples of the churches to direct our steps; and happy did we think ourselves, if we could find now and then some peas, onions, or garlick, in the gardens of the ruined vil

lages,—otherwise we had to support ourselves on roots. In about a week after leaving the forest, we arrived at Alba, where we found nothing but human bones, and the walls of the churches and palaces, still stained with Christian blood.

"Ten miles off, there was near a wood a country house, commonly called *Frata*, and four miles from this forest a high mountain, where many individuals of both sexes had taken refuge. When we reached it the fugitives congratulated us with tears in their eyes, and questioned us concerning the perils we had encountered. They offered us black bread, made of a mixture of flour with oak bark, and we thought it the most delicious thing we had ever eaten."*

The horrible devastations committed by the Mongols in Poland and Hungary had spread particular terror through the whole empire of Germany, and a crusade was preached against the barbarians, who seemed eager for the destruction of the very name of the Christians. The letters which Gregory the Ninth addressed to the people, to animate them to the holy war, paint in lively colours his grief and alarm. "Many affairs of grave importance," he writes, "are at this time incessantly occupying our thoughts; the melancholy state of the Holy Land; the tribulations of the Church; the deplorable condition of the Roman Empire. But we confess, we forget all these causes of affliction, and even what most particularly concerns us, when we think of the evils caused by the Tartars; for the bare thought that the Christian name might be destroyed by them in our days, is enough to break our bones, to dry up our marrow, to wither our flesh, destroy our strength, and fills us with such lively grief and anguish, that we are, so to speak, beside ourselves, and know not whither to turn."†

For three years, Hungary remained one vast theatre of carnage and destruction. King Bela continued to implore the

* Rogerii, "Miserabile Carmen."

† Dlugoss, "Hist. Polon.," lib. vii. p. 682.

help of the sovereigns of Europe, but still in vain, though the Papacy used all its influence to obtain help for this unfortunate kingdom. Gregory IX. granted to those who should take arms in his defence, the same indulgence as if they had gone to the Holy Land.

He wrote to Christian kings, princes, counts, magistrates, archbishops, and bishops, ordering the latter to preach the crusade, to grant indulgences, to relieve from ecclesiastical censures, in a word, to employ all the means in their power to encourage the people to take up arms against the Tartars. In a letter addressed to Bela, he exhorts him to put his trust in the mercy of God, who, having hurled against his people this scourge of his wrath, provoked by the intolerable atrocity of their crimes, will not fail afterwards to let mercy and gentleness succeed to severity, and after having wielded the rod of chastisement, to hold out the hand of consolation. He urges the king to courage and fortitude, and promises to come to his assistance as soon as ever it shall be in his power. "If Frederick, who calls himself Emperor," he continues, "would return with a humble and contrite heart to the obedience of the Church, she would be ready to make peace with him, which would tend to the glory of God, and the good of religion; and by restoring tranquillity to the Christian world, enable us also to afford you more effectual help."*

Unfortunately for Hungary, the quarrel between the Pope and the Emperor, instead of being reconciled, became more violent than ever, and the partisans of Gregory the Ninth reproached Frederick Barbarossa with the calamities by which the Christian world was afflicted. Some even went so far as to accuse him of having called in the Tartars to Europe, and excited them secretly against the Catholics.† He had,

* This letter is dated from the Lateran, July 1, 1241. Odor Raynaldi, "Annal. Eccl.," tom. ii. p. 259.

† "Verbis adversus infideles pugnare contentus, ipse ad clienses Romanæ Ecclesiæ obterendos, Tartaricum furorem exercebat."—Matt. Parisias, "Hist. Angl."

in fact, contented himself with exhorting the Christian princes to take up arms, and had expressed himself on the subject in such choice phrases, and with such an affectation of eloquence, as to justify, in a great measure, the reproach addressed to him by the Pope, that in the presence of the Tartars, he behaved more like an idle pompous orator making speeches, than a Christian Emperor at the head of his troops.

Frederick does indeed seem to have tried to amuse himself with *bons mots*, even in the midst of the events which were making so terrible a sensation in Europe. We have said that in whatever direction the Mongols turned their arms, they sent forward envoys, who called on princes and people to submit themselves to the Grand Khan, and a refusal infallibly drew down on the country a Tartar invasion, and all the disasters and miseries that followed in its train. If submission was offered, the prince who consented to become tributary, was required to go to Kara-Koroum, to do homage to the Kha-kan. A proposal of this kind was one day made to the Emperor Frederick, in the name of the sovereign of the Tartars. He was required to do homage for his states, and offered in recompense whatever office he might choose at the court of the Khan. That was, according to Chinese notions, which were also prevalent with the Tartars, an honourable offer, quite proportioned to the dignity of the first of Christian princes. Frederick took the offer jestingly, and said, that as he was pretty well acquainted with birds of prey, he thought he had better take the office of Falconer.*

The divisions existing among the Christian princes of the West, and especially between the Pope and the Emperor, were certainly the cause of so little preparations being made in Europe for defence against the barbarous hordes that descended from the plateau of Central Asia; and the tremendous devastation that threatened them was probably only

* *Respondisse imperator fertur: quod satis scit de avibus et bene erat falconari ei.*

averted by the death of Ogotai, which obliged Batou and the other chiefs to return to Tartary, to take part in the election of a new sovereign. Had it not been for this fortunate circumstance, it is probable that the superiority of the Mongols in the art of war would have subjected other nations to a fate as deplorable as that of the Russians, the Hungarians, and the Poles. Fatal experience had shown them, that troops composed of a small number of knights in heavy armour, and a multitude of half-naked peasants,—armies without order, subordination, unity of command, or skill in military tactics, could not resist the numerous warlike and well-disciplined light cavalry of the Mongols, fertile in stratagem, accustomed to the grand operations and manœuvres of vast battle-fields, mounted on fleet horses, and able to make their attack from a considerable distance with their arrows, so that they mocked the bravery of warriors accustomed only to fight with the lance and heavy arms.

The countries of Europe were no sooner invaded than they were overwhelmed and crushed by these ferocious conquerors. In the East, the Christians had found in prompt submission something like rest and peace; but that tranquillity could not be of long duration with invading armies, with whom pillage and murder had become a regular occupation. The Mussulmans, also, were constantly endeavoring to excite the Tartars against the Christians, and urging their persecution; and small as was the regard of the Tartars for the Mussulmans, they were willing enough to comply with their suggestions in this respect; and harassed them, till they could no longer publicly exercise their religion.

At this epoch there was in Tartary, at the court of the Grand Khan, a Syrian doctor named Simeon, a learned and zealous man who had gone to preach the Gospel to the furthest extremity of Asia. His merit and his virtues had procured him access to Ogotai, who was pleased to denominate him *Ata*, that is, Father, and others called him Rabban or

Master. Simeon being informed of what the Christians of Armenia, Georgia, and Albania had been suffering, seized a favourable opportunity for making a representation on the subject to the Kha-kan. He pointed out that the persecutions carried on by the Tartars against these faithful subjects who had never resisted him, but served him with zeal, and punctually paid their tribute, must redound rather to the shame than the glory of his empire. These remonstrances were taken in good part by the Kha-kan, who, in 1241, sent Simeon himself to Armenia, as administrator of all affairs concerning the Christians, and provided him with documents as warrants of his authority, addressed to the generals who occupied those countries.

His arrival put an end for the time to the sufferings of the Christians; the free exercise of their religion was restored to them in all the countries subject to the Mongols, and not a few of the latter were converted and received baptism. Thence arose a report, generally believed in the Levant, that the Tartars had embraced Christianity, and that their chiefs had been baptized. These barbarians had inspired such terror, and it seemed so impossible to overcome them by arms, that people were glad to suppose that there was some chance of humanising them by the gentle influence of the morality of the Gospel.

The Mongols also rejected Mahomet, and persecuted the Mussulmans, and that alone was regarded, at that time, as a step towards Christianity. The very men, who had been taken for magicians or demons incarnate, when they attacked the Christians of Poland and Hungary, passed for half-converted, when they were seen making war on the Turks and Saracens.

The religious ideas of the Mongols of that period did not appear unfavourable to their conversion. It was known that they acknowledged one Almighty God, whom they named

*Tengri** (heaven), and that to this fundamental belief they did not add any very precise accessory or many superstitious practices.

In their mode of life and faith, says Frere Ricold in his naive *Peregrinacion*, "they differ from all the nations in the world; for they do not boast of having any law warranted by God, as many other nations falsely do, but simply by some instinct or movement of nature, say that there is something sovereign above all the things of this world, and that that is God.†

Rubruk, Plano Carpini, Marco Polo, and all other travellers, speak of the Tartars in this respect in the same manner.

Abul Ghazy reports that the pure adoration of one God prevailed in Tartary for the first generations after Japhet; that it ceased with the birth of Oghuz, who, however, re-established it in his dominion; that Tchinguiz-Khan was a theist, and that in a conversation with some Mahommedan doctors, he agreed that their arguments in favour of the existence and attributes of the Divinity could not be refuted, but that he contested the truth of their prophet's mission. In giving laws to the Mongols, he had purposely contented himself with establishing in their minds the basis of all legislation, leaving to time and locality to add what circumstances might render necessary. He appears to have feared that any decided creed might offer an obstacle to his conquests; and the Mongols being, in fact, indifferent to all religions, were as ready to adopt one as another, and might be inclined to give themselves an additional claim to the submission of the nations they conquered, by an ostensible conversion.

Wherever the successors of Tchinguiz-Khan established their sovereignty, they adopted the dominant mode of worship, and thus became Buddhists in China, Mussulmans in Persia, and in Germany or Italy would doubtless have em-

* "L'Histoire Mervellleuse du Grant Caan," fol. 296.
† "Histoire Genealogique des Tartares," vol. i. p. 51.

braced Christianity, so that Europe might have a second time disarmed and civilised by her religion the barbarians whom she had not been able to repulse by her arms.

The conversion of the Tartars was, therefore, a subject that greatly occupied the minds of the Christian kings of Europe, and more especially that of the sovereign pontiff.

The first missionaries were soon to be sent from France, the country privileged above all others to effect the germination of the seeds of religion and civilisation. In 1245, a Council general was assembled at Lyons, and Pope Innocent IV. mentioned among the principal motives that had induced him to convoke it, the urgent necessity of deliberating upon the methods of defending Europe against the Tartars. In the first instance, he ordered some solemn fasts and prayers, in order "to appease the anger of God;" and afterwards it was resolved that the nations exposed to the irruptions of the Mongols, should be advised to fortify their towns, and block up their roads, and that missionaries should be sent to the chiefs of the barbarians with letters from the Pope, entreating them to shed no more Christian blood, and to be converted to the true faith. Such were the measures of the Council of Lyons, to ward off from Christianity the threatened danger. The Church of Jesus Christ, always faithful to her mission, never ceased to watch over her children with maternal solicitude, whilst her apostolic zeal was, at the same time, occupied with the conversion of the infidels, and the civilisation of the barbarians.

Pope Innocent the Fourth wrote to the Prior of the Dominicans at Paris, to announce the resolution of the Council, and to charge him to choose amongst the monks of his order several brothers who might be trusted with the mission to Tartary. The prior having read the apostolic letters in a full chapter, the monks vied with one another in entreating to be chosen. Some demanded even with tears to be sent on this destination, whilst others grieved at the thought of the terrible

fatigues and certain death to which their beloved brethren were devoting themselves. Some wept with joy, for having obtained permission to depart, and others with sorrow that they were not allowed to devote themselves to death for the salvation of their neighbours.* These details transmitted by the historian of the order, sufficiently show what was the zeal and devotion of the children of St. Dominic, how they burned with the desire of saving souls, and with what fervour they were animated for the extension of the Catholic faith.

The four Dominican monks who were chosen, Anselm of Lombardy, Simon of St. Quentin, Alberic, and Alexander, went to throw themselves at the feet of the Holy Father, and received from him letters addressed to the Tartar chiefs, and the order to proceed to Persia to the camp of the Tartar general Baidjou; and according to a chronicler of the time, Innocent IV., enjoined them that, "for the remission of their sins, they should make diligent inquiry into the manners and customs of the Tartars."†

Whilst these four Dominicans were setting out for Persia, three other monks of the order of St. Francis, Benedict of Poland, Laurence of Portugal, and John of Plano Carpini, were sent to Tartary.

These embassies had the double purpose of propagating religion and civilisation. The sovereign pontiff knew well that the Tartars, ferocious and indomitable as they were, would renounce their barbarous habits, and acquire a mild and humane character, as soon as they should be converted to the Christian faith; and to labor for their conversion would be to take measures for the protection of the Christian nations of the West. He sent forth, therefore, preachers of the gospel, chosen from the Dominican and Franciscan orders, which, though still in their infancy, had shed great glory on the Church, and rendered society immense services. The Popes

* Fontana, "Monumenta Dominicana, Ann. 1245," p. 51.

† "Chron. de France, Man, de la Bibl. Imp.," No. 989. fol. 884.

were in the habit of choosing their missionary ambassadors to infidel nations from these two spiritual families.

These poor monks, habituated to a hard and mortified life, required very little accommodation during their long peregrinations. Inured to the endurance of hunger, thirst, and privations of every kind, they were able to perform these long journeys at very trifling expense; and the studious life of their convents, and their habits of preaching giving them a great command of words, rendered them better fitted than others to convince those to whom they were sent. The fervent faith by which they were animated, and their boundless devotion to the interests of the Church, and the salvation of souls, made them entirely forgetful of self, and intent only on the sacred object of their mission. Ambassadors chosen from any other class would not have offered, perhaps, at that period, the same guarantee of skill and self-abnegation, of zeal and fidelity.

CHAPTER V.

Embassy of John de Plano Carpini.—Arrival at the Camp of Batou.—Letter of Pope Innocent IV. to the Tartars.—The Ambassador of the Holy See to the Golden Horde.—Election of the Grand Khan of the Tartars.—Couyouk proclaimed Emperor.—Audience of Plano Carpini.—The Ambassadors prepare to quit the Imperial Horde.—Letter of the Tartar Emperor to the Pope.—Return of Plano Carpini to Europe.—Innocent appoints him Archbishop of Antivari.—Embassy of Brother Anselm to the Camp of the Tartars in Persia.—Interview of the French Missionaries with the Tartar Officers.—Proposal to flay and impale them.—Discussion of the Supremacy of the Pope and the Khan.—Renown of French Valour among the Tartars.—Departure of the Monks.—Letter of the Tartar Lieutenant.—Manifesto of the Grand Khan.—St. Louis receives in Cyprus two Envoys from Iltchikadai.—Letter of the Tartar Prince.—Narrative of the Constable of Armenia.—St. Louis sends an Embassy to reply to Iltchikadai.—Its Ill-success and Return.

The two embassies set off in 1246; the Franciscans, John de Plano Carpini,* and his companion Stephen, travelling through Bohemia and Silesia. At Breslau, they found their other associate, Benedict of Poland, who was to share their fatigues, and serve them as an interpreter. They learned at Lencise that, in order to be admitted to the presence of the Mongol chiefs, it was necessary to be provided with presents; but as mendicant friars, living themselves on alms, they had no possessions to offer. Fortunately, however, Duke Conrad, his duchess, and the Bishop of Lencise, came to their assistance, and gave them furs to be offered as presents. The three missionaries reached Cracow, and there met with the Russian

* John de Plano Carpini, the chief of the embassy, was a native of the district of Perouse, in the vicinity of Assise. He had been the companion of St. Francis, and held responsible positions in Saxony and other parts of Germany, and being full of zeal for his order, had founded convents of it in Bohemia, Hungary, Norway, Dacia, Lorraine, and Spain; possibly also in Barbary, at least if he was the "Friar John" sent by Gregory IX. to the Mohammedan chief of Tunis.

Prince Vassilko, Duke of Vladimir, who took them with him to his domains, and kept them there some time. These zealous apostles did not fail to profit by this opportunity of preaching to the duke, the bishops, and the people, the duty of returning to the unity of the Catholic Church; but they could not get them to take any definitive resolution on that important question.

Vassilko, on their departure, gave them one of his own attendants to conduct them through a country exposed to the depredations of the Lithuanians, and as far as Kiew, then the metropolis of Russia, and in the hands of the Tartars. Before reaching it, however, Friar John fell dangerously ill, at a place Danilow, and in order not to delay the accomplishment of his mission, had to get himself carried through the snow in very severe weather. Friar Stephen of Bohemia was too much exhausted to be able to proceed further.

The two friars, John de Plano Carpini, and Benedict of Poland, reached the advanced posts of the Mongols on the banks of the Dnieper, and were taken to the quarters of the prince who held command over the Tartars on this frontier; but, as no one could be found capable of interpreting the Latin missives, with which they were entrusted, that chief sent them to the court of Batou, the grandson of Tchinguiz-khan. They set off on the first day of Lent, and after having ridden at full gallop every day for five weeks, with no food but millet, and no drink but melted snow, and changing their horses often seven times in the day, arrived at last at the encampment of Batou, on the banks of the Volga. Tents were assigned to them, pitched at about three miles from the general quarters. The chief attendant of Batou asked what they meant to offer to their master, when they should be permitted to prostrate themselves in his presence; but they replied, that their Lord, the Pope, not being sure that his envoys would ever reach their destination, had not entrusted any presents to them, especially as they had had to pass through dangerous coun-

tries; but that what they had received on their own account they were willing to offer. When they had placed these things in the hands of the attendant, they were conducted to the tent of Batou for an audience.

The Franciscans were obliged to pass between two fires in order to purify themselves in the opinion of the Tartars from the suspicion of evil intentions, and to neutralise any malignant influence which their very presence might bring with it. There were also two lances planted upright near the fires, with a cord stretched between them, to which were attached some pieces of cloth. The persons, animals, and articles to be purified were passed under this cord; and at the same time two women, one on each side, sprinkled water on them, uttering certain magical words. The two monks were told to kneel down three times on the left knee before the tent of the prince, and to take particular care not to touch the threshold with their feet as they went in. This is, even to the present day, a matter to be attended to in entering a Mongol tent.

Batou, the eldest prince of the family of Tchinguiz-khan, who was next in power to the Grand Khan, was a shrewd man, full of stratagem in war, cruel in action, and dreaded even by his own people. There was a grand display of luxury and magnificence in his camp; guards and officers of every grade; beautiful tents taken from the king of Hungary; tables covered with vases of gold and silver; and, during the repasts, musicians singing or playing on instruments. A dais, or red parasol was borne over his head; no one addressed him but on their knees; in short, all the ceremony of an imperial court was observed.

Batou was seated on a kind of elevated divan, with one of his wives beside him. The members of his family, and the principal chiefs were seated in the middle of the tent; and behind them on the ground reposed persons of an inferior rank, men on the right and women on the left.

The missionaries were obliged to kneel down, and they then

presented their letters, and begged that some interpreter might translate them.

The letters of Innocent IV., dated from Lyons the 3d of the *Nones* of March, 1245, were addressed to the king and the nation of the Tartars. In one of them, after having briefly explained the principal dogmas of the Christian religion,—the redemption of the human race effected by the sacrifice of the Son of God, His resurrection, and His ascension, preceded by the appointment of a vicar on earth who is charged with the care of souls and the keys of the kingdom of heaven,—the sovereign pontiff declares that he, the unworthy successor of that vicar, desires to effect the salvation of the king and the Tartar nation; and that, as he cannot be everywhere himself, he has delegated his powers to the monks, the bearers of the presents, in order that they may make known the doctrines of the Christian religion. In conclusion, Innocent exhorts the Tartars to receive his envoys kindly, or rather to do honour to him in their persons.*

The other letter contains this passage:—"Since not only men, but also animals without reason, and even the elements of the universe, are united together by certain laws of affinity, —after the example of the celestial spirits, whose choirs have been established in perpetual harmony by the Creator of all things,—we find ourselves compelled to be greatly astonished that you should have invaded, as you have done, a great number of Christian and other countries, horribly ravaged and desolated them, carrying your devastating arms with incessant fury in every direction; breaking all the ties of natural affinity, sparing neither age nor sex, but putting all indiscriminately to the sword.

"Desiring, therefore, after the example of the God of peace, to see all men united in the fear of the Lord, we warn and entreat you to refrain absolutely from persecuting the Chris-

* "Odor. Raynald. Ann. 1245." No. 16. p. 838. Wadding. "Annales Minorum," vol. 3. p. 116.

tians, and, to appease the wrath of the Divine Majesty, justly provoked by so many offences, to submit yourselves to some suitable penance. For if up to this hour the Almighty God has permitted the nations to fall before you, and under the fury of your attacks, that need not give you audacity to pursue your cruelties any farther. God sometimes omits for a time to chastise the proud; but if they neglect to humble themselves, he never fails to punish their iniquities even in this world, reserving to himself a more complete vengeance in that which is to come."

Innocent concluded this letter by pronouncing a panegyric on Friar John and his companions, begging the Tartars to receive them well, furnish them with provisions, and with an escort on their return. He then, simply enough, begs them to tell him in their answer, what can have induced them to destroy other nations, and what are their projects for the future.*

Some days after the delivery of these letters, which were translated into the Mongol, Russian, and Arabic languages, Batou sent off the friars to the Yellow Horde. They set out on Easter day, accompanied by two Tartars, who had orders to make them travel very fast, though these intrepid missionaries were so weak that they could hardly keep themselves on their horses, and were obliged to get their eyes bandaged up (a precaution frequently adopted by travellers in these regions, to relieve the pain occasioned by hard galloping); they finally arrived at the imperial residence on the 22nd of July, about five months after their entrance on the Mongol territory near the Dnieper.

When the envoys of the Holy See arrived at the Imperial Horde, they found that the Kuan Ogotai was dead; that his widow Tourakina was invested with the regency till the election of his successor, and that she was sparing no pains to get

* "Quid vos ad gentium exterminium moverit aliarum et quid ulterius intendatis, per easdem fratres plenarie intimetis."—Odor Raynald, Ann. 1245. No. 18. p. 540.

a son named Couyouk proclaimed in the Kouriltai, or general assembly. Couyouk did not ostensibly take part in the public affairs before the election, and could not receive the ambassadors, but he gave them shelter, and after leaving them some days to rest themselves, sent them to his mother the empress regent, Tourakina, who occupied a magnificent tent of white silk.

The day fixed for the election, however, was approaching, and the Kouriltai had been convoked to meet at a spot not far from a fine lake, in a district called the Seventy Hills. This convocation had set in motion all the Tartar princes of Asia, and the roads that led from all parts of the continent to the centre of Tartary were covered with travellers. The princes of the blood came attended by a numerous military escort; Utjuken with his *eighty* sons; the widow of Touloui, accompanied by her children; the descendants of Ogotai, Djoutchi, and Tchagatai, followed by the chiefs of their particular tribes; the military and civil governors of the Mongol possessions in China, Argoun, and Massoud; the governor-general of Persia, and of Turkestan and Trans-Oxiana, with the princes and lords of those countries in their train; the sultan of Roum-Rok-uddin; Yaroslav, the Grand Duke of Russia; two princes named David, who were contending for the crown of Georgia; the brother of the sovereign of Aleppo; ambassadors from the Caliph of Bagdad, and from the princes of Ismail, Mossoul, Karss, and Kerman;—all bringing magnificent offerings, and rivalling each other in the richness and pomp of their equipments.

In the midst of this crowd of distinguished personages, surrounded by all the splendour of Asiatic luxury, there were two persons remarkable for the simplicity of their attire, and the modesty of their behaviour; namely, the two spiritual children of St. Francis d'Assisium, sent to preach the gospel to these fierce barbarians, and teach them to seek before all things the "kingdom of God and his righteousness."

In this spot, named Syra-Ordou, there were now collected two thousand white tents, which were still scarcely sufficient to lodge the princes, lords, and ambassadors waiting to prostrate themselves before the new sovereign. The merchants of Persia, India, and China had flocked thither in great numbers, with the most precious productions of the various countries of the East, and the neighbourhood of the imperial camp was filled with a countless multitude, whose agitation and tremendous tumult gave a formidable character to the assembly.

The princes of the blood and generals assembled in an immense tent, capable of containing two thousand persons, and surrounded at some distance by a painted balustrade. Public affairs were discussed till about the middle of the day, and then the members of the assembly set to drinking to excess of fermented mare's milk; every day they put on garments of a different colour, distributed by the sovereign, and even the monks one day received vestments of silk embroidered with gold, which they put on over their robes of serge.

The electors of the Kouriltai yielding at length to the influence of the regent Tourakina, agreed to choose Couyouk, and gave their votes for him unanimously.

He, according to the practice on such occasions, at first refused the supreme dignity, but after a long resistance declared he would accept the empire, on condition that it should be secured to his posterity. The electors then made the declaration—"As long as there shall exist a morsel of the flesh of thy race, which thrown on the grass would repel an ox, we will give to no other person the dignity of Khan;" and as soon as this was concluded the air was rent by tremendous acclamations; wands, terminated by tufts of scarlet cloth, were bent before Couyouk; the members of the assembly did him homage by nine prostrations, and the vassal princes, and foreign ambassadors, who had been left outside the enclosure of the imperial tent, as well as the immense multitude that

covered the plain, flung themselves prostrate on the ground, and Couyouk then issued from his tent to salute the sun by three genuflexions.

After the election of the new emperor, the whole assembly left the Syra-Ordou, to betake themselves on horseback to another encampment three or four leagues off, the Tartar name of which signifies "Golden Horde;" the imperial tent destined for the enthronisation of Couyouk being in fact supported by pillars covered by plates of gold. This inauguration had been appointed for the 15th of August, but could not, on account of the hail that fell, take place till the 24th. The ceremonies by which it was preceded and followed, present a whimsical mixture of rudeness and magnificence, and were characteristic of a people issuing from barbarism to enter on the confines of civilisation.

Bergeron, translating the narratives of Plano Carpini into his own simple language, says:—"All the lords and barons assembled in the place, put a golden seat in the midst of them, on which they made him sit, saying, 'We will, we pray, and we command that you have power and dominion over us all.' He replied, 'If you wish that I should be you king, are you resolved and disposed, each one of you, to do all that I shall command? to come when I shall call you? to go where I shall send you? and to kill all those whom I shall tell you to kill?'

"And they all answered, 'Yes.' Then he said to them, 'From henceforward my simple word shall serve me as a sword.' To which they all consented.

"That being done, they placed a piece of felt on the ground, made him sit on it, and said to him, 'Look up, and acknowledge God, and consider well the piece of felt upon which thou art seated. If thou governest well thy state; if thou art liberal and beneficent; if thou causest justice to reign; if thou honourest thy princes and chiefs, each according to his rank and dignity,—thou shalt reign in all splendour and magnificence, and all the earth shall be subjected to thy sway;

but if thou dost the contrary of all that, thou shalt become miserable, vile, and contemptible, and so poor that thou shalt not have as much as the piece of felt upon which thou art seated.' After that the chiefs made the wife of Couyouk sit on the same piece of felt by the side of him, and then raised them both in the air, proclaiming them with loud cries emperor and empress of all the Tartars.

This ceremony was followed by an enormous banquet, to which were invited the princes, princesses, and grand dignitaries of the empire. The repast was composed of nothing but meat, served with a profusion of rice wine brought from China, and of kumys, or spirit made from mares' milk; and the guests drank till the middle of the night, to the sound of musical instruments and martial songs. The feast was renewed every day for seven days in succession.

Towards the end of August, the Franciscans were admitted to an audience of Couyouk. It was a few days after his elevation to the throne; and there were admitted, at the same time, many princes and ambassadors, whose names were read in a loud voice by the Chancellor Tchincai. These personages brought to the emperor an immense quantity of presents, consisting principally of rich stuffs, girdles of silk and gold, or precious furs; and there were also horses with iron or leathern armour.

Couyouk was a man of about forty years of age, of small figure, and very grave deportment, never listening or replying to anything but through the intervention of his first minister, and pronouncing irrevocably upon every matter laid before him. Every one addressed him kneeling.

From the Golden Horde the monks proceeded to another residence, at which the two were several times admitted to the imperial tent; this was crimson and gold, and had been made in China. On a circular divan was raised a throne of ivory, elaborately carved, and enriched with gold and precious stones. This was the work of a Russian goldsmith named

Côme. One day some of the emperor's officers came to tell the Franciscans that they must leave the court till further orders; and they were then sent to the former regent, Tourakina. This they found was on account of a certain ceremony that was to be performed, which it was desired the missionaries should not witness. It consisted in Couyouk's raising a great banner towards the West, and while waving it, threatening to carry fire and sword over all the countries in that direction which should not, along with all the rest of the earth, submit to his authority.

The monks were sent for back again when this was over, but very little notice was taken of them; and for a whole month they suffered much from scarcity of food, as what was distributed to them for four days barely sufficed for one. Fortunately, they were assisted in their distress by the Russian goldsmith Côme, who seemed to take a pleasure in giving them information about the Khan and his subjects. They also received much information from various Russians and Hungarians, both priests and laymen, who could speak Latin and French, and who had been living among the Tartars for several years.*

The Grand Khan at length gave a solemn audience to all the ambassadors, and the envoys of the Pope resolved to profit by it, to fulfil, if possible, the mission with which they are charged. The missionaries having asked Couyouk why his armies ravaged the world, he replied, "God has commanded me and my forefathers to exterminate criminal nations."

The monks stated that the sovereign pontiff desired to know whether the Kha-kan had embraced Christianity already; for, in fact, there had been a rumour of such a conversion, and the fame of it had spread to the West, and is even related as a fact by Aboulfarages. "God knows it," was the reply;

* Narrative of Plano Carpini, *passim*.

"and if the Pope wishes to know too, he has but to come and see."

It is certain that Tourakina did make some profession of Christianity, and that the emperor had in his service a great number of Christians, amongst whom he especially distinguished one of his ministers and one of his secretaries.

The Franciscans had come to Tartary in the persuasion that the Kha-khan protected the Christians; but, says Plano Carpini, "we were not long in perceiving that this Emperor, in concert with his vassals, had raised his banner against the Roman Church, and against all Christian kings and princes." He had, in fact, formed the design of turning his arms towards the west, and death alone prevented its execution.

The successors of Tchinguiz-Khan belonged to no distinct religious system, and did not, till the time of Khublai, who adopted Buddhism, and compelled his subjects to follow his example. It is, therefore, by no means surprising that Christians should have been well received by Couyouk.

That prince gave, doubtless, an equally good reception to Mussulmans and Lamas; and such is, in fact, the ordinary result of perfect indifference to religion.

We shall see the emperors of the Mantchoo Tartar dynasty at Pekin performing, as patriarchs of the sect of the Lettered, civil ceremonies in honour of the heavens, the earth, and Confucius, addressing prayers to the spirits honoured by the Tao-Sse, adoring Buddha incarnate in the persons of the superior Lamas, and sending Catholic inscriptions to the churches of the Jesuits, without in the least concerning themselves about the contradictions involved in such proceedings.

The ambassadors of the Holy See were at length under the necessity of taking their departure, and the court began to prepare some letters which they were to carry back. It was asked whether there were about the Pope any persons who understood Tartar, Arabic, or Russian. The reply was in the negative; there were, indeed Saracens in Europe; but they

were at a great distance from the Holy Father, and the Franciscans begged that the letter might be written in Tartar, and then interpreted to them word for word, so that they might make a faithful version of it in Latin.

On the 11th of November the Khan's secretaries came to them to explain literally their master's reply. After they had read the Latin translation, they had it read twice over, and put back word for word into Tartar, in order to assure themselves of its perfect conformity with the original, and they also gave the monks an Arabic version, in case they should find any one who understood that language. This answer of Couyouk's, which had been got up with so much pains, was for a long time lost sight of, but has at length been discovered in a MS. of Colbert, on the Appendix to the recital of Benedict of Poland.*

This is the translation :—

"*Couyouk, by the power of God, Khan and Emperor of all men, to the Great Pope.*

"You, and all the Christians who inhabit the West, have sent me by an ambassador certain authentic letters, with the design of forming with me a treaty of peace. According to the words of your envoys, and the tenour of your letters, you desire to have peace with us.

"If, then, you wish to have peace—you Pope, and you Emperors, Kings, chiefs of towns, and governors of countries, do not delay to come to me and settle this peace. You shall hear our answers and our pleasure.

"The tenour of these letters declares that we ought to be baptized and become Christians; to that we reply briefly that we do not understand why we should do anything of the kind. It was said in your letter also, that you were astonished at our slaughter of men, especially of Christians, and in particular of the Hungarians, Poles, and Moravians. We reply, that we do not understand that either. Nevertheless, that it may not appear that we pass over this point in silence, we have thought proper to give you this answer. It was because they did not obey the command of God and of Tchinguiz-Khan; and because, yielding to bad counsels, they put to death our ambassadors.† In consequence of that, God has commanded me to an

* Recueil des Voyages et Memoires de la Société de Géographie, vol. iv. p. 594.

† Couyouk here alludes to the murder of the Tartar ambassadors by the Russians, before the battle of Kalka. (See History of the Russian Empire, by Karampir, vol. iii. p. 286.)

nihilate them, and has delivered them entirely into my hands. And if it were not the work of God, what could one man do against another man? But you inhabitants of the West, you adore God, you say,—you believe that you are the only Christians, and you despise others. But how do you know on whom He will deign to confer his grace? We adore God, and it is in his strength and power that we shall destroy all nations. If man had not the strength of God, what could man do?"

The Tartar Emperor had intended to have his answer carried by his own envoys, who were to have accompanied the Franciscans on their return; but they seem to have feared such an addition to their company, and dissuaded him from making it. "We found," says Carpini, "that for various reasons it was not expedient that Couyouk should send his ambassadors with us; firstly, because we feared that if they came to know the wars and dissensions there were amongst ourselves, that might encourage them the more to attack us; secondly, because they would have been so many spies upon us; thirdly, that we feared they might be insulted or even killed, as our people are somewhat proud and arrogant. Now, the custom of the Tartars is, never to make peace or truce with those who have killed an ambassador, until they have had vengeance. The fourth reason was, that we apprehended they might have been carried off from us by force; and the fifth and last, that their coming could have served to little purpose, since they had but to carry letters to the Pope and other princes, which were in substance the same as those with which we were charged."

On the 13th of November the papal envoys were admitted to a farewell audience with the Khan, and his letter was delivered to them, sealed with the imperial seal, which, according to Plano Carpini, had a motto thus translated by the Russian goldsmith Côme, "God in heaven, and Couyouk-Khan on earth. Power of God. Seal of the Emperor of all men." The envoys were afterwards conducted to an audience of the empress-mother, who gave each of them a pelisse of fox skin, with the hair outwards, and a robe of other stuff.

The Franciscans followed, on their return, the route by which they had come. It was winter, and the poor monks had mostly to sleep upon the snow, or in a hole that they had scraped for themselves in the ground. "It was a bare country without any trees, and often in the morning we found ourselves quite covered by snow that the wind had drifted on us."*

They returned to Kiew on the 9th of June, 1247, and John de Plano Carpini had the joy of finding that some proposals tending to re-union with the Church of Rome, which he had made to certain princes and bishops of Russia, had been accepted. After this, traversing Russia, Poland, Bohemia and Germany, he passed the Rhine at Cologne, continued his route by Liege and Champagne, and finally at Lyons placed in the Pope's hands the letter which he had brought from the Emperor of Tartary.

The pontiff kept near his person for three months the courageous Franciscans who had encountered so many fatigues and perils to fulfil his mission. Friar Salimbeni saw Plano Carpini in France shortly after his return, and found him "a pleasant man, of lively wit, eloquent, well instructed, and skilful in many things. He had written a large book concerning the things he had seen among the Tartars and elsewhere; and when people fatigued him with questions on the subject, he made them read his narrative; as many times," adds the chronicler, "I have myself seen and heard."†

The archbishopric of Antivari, in Dalmatia, having become vacant during his absence, Friar John was raised to it. "Be thou blessed by the Lord, and by me his vicar," says Pope Innocent; "for I see that in thee are fulfilled the saying of the wise man: 'As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him; for he refresheth the soul of his masters.'‡ Well done, thou good and faithful

* Bergeron, p. 133.
† Sbaraglia, p. 452. ‡ Prov. xxv. 8.

servant; since thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will confide unto thee many things."

The new archbishop was sent some time afterwards on a mission to St. Louis, but he did not survive long his return from the East; and if we consider that he was sixty-five years old when he undertook the perilous mission to Tartary, and that he was afflicted by painful corpulence, it will seem surprising that he should not have sunk immediately under the hardships and privations attendant on such an expedition.

He had for a successor in the see of Antivari, "Brother Lawrence," of Portugal, who had also performed a mission to the Mongols.

We have said that after the Council of Lyons, Innocent the Fourth sent off an embassy to Persia at the same time as the one to Tartary, and that while the Franciscans were making their way to the court of the Grand Khan, in Central Asia, the Brothers Anselm, Simon de St. Quentin, Alexander, and Alberic, monks of the order of St. Dominic, had received orders to proceed to Persia, to the nearest Tartar camp. This legation, pursuing its route along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, arrived, in the month of August, 1247, at the post of the general Baidjou. The Mongol chief was encamped with his hordes at Chowarezem, near the castle of the Sitians, —a name probably corrupted,—but, according to Friar Anselm, situated fifty-nine days' journey from St. Jean d'Acre. The Dominicians, having expressed a desire to be admitted to Baidjou, in order to acquit themselves of their commission, that chief's officers demanded who they were. Friar Anselm the chief person of the embassy, replied in the name of all, "I am the legate of the Pope, whom Christians regard as superior to all other men." At these words the Tartars burst forth indignantly, "Why do you talk with that pride, saying that your pope is above all other men? Do you not know that our Khan is the Son of Heaven, and that Baidjou is his

lieutenant? Their names must be known through the whole world?"

Friar Anselm replied that the Pope did not know either the Khan or Baidjou—that he had never heard their names that he had merely heard that a nation called Tartars had issued from the remote East, had subjugated many countries, and destroyed an innumerable multitude of men; that if the Pope had known the name of the Khan, or of his lieutenant, he would not have failed to write it in the letters with which he had commissioned them; that the pontiff, afflicted at all the carnage that had taken place, and especially at the murder of so many Christians, had ordered them to repair promptly to the first Tartar camp that they could find, and in his name entreat the chief of that army, and all those who obeyed him, to abstain henceforth from slaughtering men, and particularly Christians; and to expiate, by penance, the atrocious crimes they had committed.

This was the tenor of the letters with which the Pope had charged them.

Such language as this, to ferocious conquerors accustomed to see men crawling on the earth at their feet, could not but produce an astounding effect; and the officers and interpreters withdrew to report to Baidjou these unaccountable words.

In a few moments they returned to ask whether the envoys brought any presents from the Pope.

"We bring nothing," said Friar Anselm; "the Pope is not in the habit of sending presents; on the contrary, he receives offerings, both from Christians and infidels." The astonishment of the Tartars was at its height when they found that, in defiance of the invariable practice of ambassadors in Asia, these audacious men had brought nothing. "What!" said they, "will you dare to appear before our master with empty hands? That is what no one has ever done yet."

Anselm replied, that if for that reason they could not be admitted, they would give them the letters to deliver.

The officers thereupon went to take their orders from Baidjou, and every time they went and came they put on a fresh dress. When they returned again, the chief of them said to Anselm and his companions, "If you wish to see the face of our master, and present to him your letters, you must adore him as the Son of Heaven, and prostrate yourselves three times, for such is the order of the Kha-kan, who reigns over the whole earth."

The monks considered that this sort of adoration might be regarded as a sign of submission to the Mongol emperor on the part of the pope and the church, and that it would give great occasion of triumph to all the enemies of the Church in Asia. They refused, therefore, to consent to it, saying that they were willing to salute the Tartar general in the same manner that they would their own master; but that to agree to the proposal now made to them would be ignominious to the Christian religion, and that they would suffer death rather than submit to such a ceremony. To show, however, that they were not influenced in their refusal by any feeling of pride, they assured them that if Baidjou and his officers would become Christians they would not hesitate a moment to prostrate themselves before them, and to kiss the very sole of their foot, in honour of the true God.

At these words the Mongols flew into a violent passion. "What!" they cried, "do you counsel us to make ourselves Christians, and become dogs like you and your pope?" And after overwhelming them with the most vehement abuse, they withdrew in high wrath.

Baidjou, to whom the reply of the missionaries had been communicated, wished to put them to death at once; and one of his officers improved on the proposal by suggesting that the chief of the embassy should be flayed alive, his skin stuffed with straw, and thus sent back to the pope by his companions.* But the oldest of Baidjou's six wives, and the offi-

* Auchun disent que ly principaux messager fust escorchies et lu peau fust emplie

cer who had been in communication with the missionaries, opposed this act of barbarity. "If you kill these messengers," said Baidjou's wife, "you will draw on you the hatred of all who shall hear of such a cruelty. You will also lose the chance of receiving ambassadors again, and consequently also the presents that they bring; and people will not fail to exercise reprisals on your own envoys." "Do you remember," said the officer, "how wrathful the Kha-kan was against me because of that ambassador you made me kill, whose heart I tore out of his breast, and wore it afterwards round my neck?* If you should tell me to kill these ambassadors, know that I will not do it. I would rather go and seek the Khan, and accuse you of perfidy and barbarity."

Baidjou yielded to this vehement opposition, and consented to let the missionaries live. He then sent his interpreters to ask how they saluted their own sovereign. Friar Anselm drew his cowl a little back and bent his head. The Mongols then asked how they worshipped God. Anselm replied that they adored him in various ways—sometimes kneeling, sometimes prostrate, &c. "Since you are Christians," said the Mongol, roughly, "you worship wood and stone, so you need not refuse to worship Baidjou, for it is ordered by the Son of Heaven that the same honours shall be paid to his lieutenant as to himself."

Friar Anselm endeavoured to explain that it was the Divinity represented by the wood and stone that Christians worshipped, and that their master could not set up that claim.

The Mongol officer then signified to the Dominicans that they were to go to Syra-Ordou, to the imperial court, in order to contemplate the magnificence and glory of the Grand Khan. Anselm replied that the pope had said nothing to them about

de pailleet envoyée à l'apostelle par ses compagnones.—*Chron. Monas. Franc.* fol. 393.

* Te souvient il comment Cham fu' jadis courechiez à moi pour un message que tu me fesis ochirre, que je li esrachai le cuer dou ventre et puis le pendi à mon poitral, et portai par l'ost.—*Ibid.* fol. verso.

the Grand Khan, but had merely ordered them to go to the first Tartar army they could find, and that it was enough for them to have accomplished his instructions.

"How do you Christians dare," said the officer, "then, to pretend that your pope is superior in dignity to all other men? Who ever heard that the name of your pope was spread everywhere,—respected and feared by the whole earth, as that of our Khan is? Who has ever heard that he possessed as many kingdoms as the Son of Heaven has by the favor of God acquired, and who rules from the furthest East to the Mediterranean and Black Sea? The Khan must be therefore superior in glory and power to your Pope and all other men."

"We say," replied Friar Anselm, "that our Lord the Pope is above all other men, because God has granted to St. Peter and his successors authority over the universal Church until the end of the world." And the monk then began to explain this article of the faith; but he was soon interrupted by the insolent vociferations of Baidjou's officers, who prevented him also from replying to another point in the speech.

During the residence of the Dominicans in the Tartar camp there were long and lively discussions with them concerning the power of the Pope and the Kha-kan, in which of course it was very difficult for the disputants to come to an understanding, since the legate spoke only of spiritual domination by the cross and the gospel, and the Mongols thought of nothing but power exercised by force of arms. In the conversations that took place, however, the Tartars managed adroitly to find out whether the Frank crusaders had again entered Syria.

These they knew by reputation; for their valour, their superiority in arms and discipline, and the continual wars they waged with the Turks and Arabs, had long rendered them formidable in Turkey, Egypt, and Syria; and the Tartars had made few expeditions to these countries, in which

the Franks did not appear to them in the character of auxiliaries.

When the Mongols seized upon Erzeroum, there were among the captives two Frenchmen, who had, by their almost extravagant bravery, given the Tartars a high idea of the men of their country.

Thus William of Nangis relates the circumstances that took place.* "Some of the Tartars had heard that the French were marvellously brave and skilful warriors; and when they heard that these two were Frenchmen, they came to their master, and begged him to set them to fight together, for that they desired to see the way the Frenchmen had in battle, and also that they would have great joy, if they should kill one another.

"It was therefore ordered that they should be armed in the best way, and mounted on two good horses; but when the two Christians were armed and mounted, they did not go at one another as the Tartars desired, but rushed on the Tartars with their lances and swords, killed fifteen of them, and wounded cruelly full thirty more, before they could be taken and killed themselves.

"By these two Christians, both the Tartar and the Turk had afterwards much fear of the people of France."

Thus William of Nangis appears to date from this siege that fear of the French, which, according to him, was felt by all the Mongols. It is at least certain that the latter forbade their tributary nations to take any of them into their armies; and it is not, therefore, surprising that they should have made inquiries of the Dominicans touching their redoubtable compatriots.

After a very long delay, the Pope's letters were translated into Persian by the Greek and Turkish interpreters, and afterwards from Persian into Tartar by those of Baidjou. It

* "Annales du Règne St. Louis," p. 183.

was then proposed to send two of the envoys to the imperial court, whilst the others should await their return; but Anselm, for the reasons before alleged, refused to agree to this proposal.

The day wore away in these unsatisfactory negotiations, and then the monks, without having broken their fast, went back to the tent assigned them, which was about a mile from Baidjou's quarters.

In four days they returned to the camp, to beg for the general's answer, and his permission to depart; but in vain. They reiterated their request, going every day for nine weeks, and remaining several hours exposed to the heat of the sun in the month of June, without the slightest notice being taken of them. No one even spoke to them, and their only food was black bread and a little water.

Very often they were kept fasting till the evening, and then they received only some mares' or cows' milk.

They were never offered a drop of wine, rice wine, or kumys; but now and then a few drops of vinegar were put into the water that was given to them.

"The missionaries," says Friar Simon of St. Quentin, "were treated by the Tartars as miserable wretches—dogs, unworthy of an answer; and it was thus that Baidjou manifested his resentment against them for having offended him by the frankness of their speech. He was, indeed, going in his anger to have them killed, and actually gave the order for it three times."

At last the missionaries got their dismissal and the reply of Baidjou to the Pope. It was in these words:—

"*By the divine command of the Khan, the words of Baidjou are transmitted.*

"Know, O Pope, that thy messengers have come and brought us letters. Thy messengers have spoken great words, and we do not know whether thou hast ordered them to do so, or whether they have done it of themselves. Thy letters bore, amongst others, these words:—'You kill many people; you massacre and you lay waste.' The immutable command of God, and

the order of him who rules the whole earth is this: '*Whosoever will obey us, let him remain in possession of his land, his water, his patrimony; and let him give up his forces to the master of the universe; whosoever shall resist this order and command, let him be destroyed and annihilated.*' We transmit thee this order, by virtue of which, if thou wishest to keep thy land, thy water, and thy patrimony, thou must come, thou Pope, in person to us, and afterwards go and present thyself to him, who is the master of the whole earth. If thou dost not obey this immutable command of God, and of him who rules the earth, we know not what will happen. God alone knows it. Thou art to send us messengers to inform us whether thou wilt come or not, and if thou wilt be our friend or our enemy.

"See that thy answer be sent promptly, in order that we may forward it by Aybeg and Sargis.

"Given in the district of Sitians, the 20th of July."

Some days before the despatch of this insolent missive, Baidjou had received from the Grand Khan a general order to regulate his conduct towards foreign nations.

This document has been preserved, and its tone of arrogance and contempt may be considered as a proof of its authenticity. The Kha-kan speaks like the master of the world, and treats all sovereigns who do not obey his orders as rebels worthy of death.

These ideas are still the basis of public law in China. No other monarch is recognised in the universe than the Son of Heaven; every assertion of independence is stigmatised as revolt, and all nations as robbers who dare to wage war with the empire. The document in question exhibits, indeed, many peculiarities of style, evidently borrowed from the Chinese, and they are recognisable even through the alterations that the translators have been obliged to make. Baidjou was charged to transmit to the pope a copy of the imperial manifesto, which runs thus:—

"By the command of the living God, Tchinguiz-Khan, the gracious and venerable Son of Heaven, proclaims that God is elevated above all things. God is immortal, and Tchinguiz-Khan is the sole governor of the earth. We desire that thi manifesto shall reach the ears of all people in every place of the nations which obey us, as well as of those still unsubmis-

sive. Thou, therefore, Baidjou, must notify to them that such is the command of the living and immortal God. In sending thy despatches, thou n ust also send this order whithersoever a messenger can penetrate; and whoever shall oppose it, let him be annihilated, and let his country be ravaged.

"I swear to thee that he must be very deaf who will not hear this commandment, and very blind who shall see it without obeying it, and very lame and crippled who shall be acquainted with it and not execute it.

"Let my order come to the knowledge of all, both of the learned and of the ignorant; and whoever, having heard it, shall fail to observe it, let him be broken, let him be ruined, let him die! Make this known, then, O Baidjou! everywhere and to all.

"He who shall desire and seek the good and the repose of his house, and shall be willing to serve us, shall be saved and honoured; but whoever shall oppose my precepts, I order that he shall be chastised according to thy pleasure."

The bearers of this impertinent and absurdly arrogant letter were Tartars, who came to summon the pope to submit to the rule of the Kha-kan.

Innocent IV., listening only to the suggestions of prudent and moderate policy, received them with marks of high distinction; ordered scarlet robes lined with costly furs to be given to them, and often conversed familiarly with them by means of interpreters.* The chroniclers of the epoch formed various conjectures as to the political object of these curious diplomatic relations; but, according to Matthew Paris, the true purpose of the mission of these Tartar envoys remained a mystery even to the secretaries and notaries, and to the families most intimately connected with the pontifical court.†

* Dedit eis vestes pretiosissimas quas robas vulgariter appellamus, de scarlato præclecto, cum penulis et furaulis de pellibus, et libenter confabulatur per interpretes.—Matth. Paris, p. 1001.

† Causa autem nuncii eorum adeo cunctos latuit in curia, ut nec clericis, notariis nec aliis licet familiaribus claruit patefactum.—*Ibid.*

These first embassies from the papacy to the Tartars had not had all the good results that had been anticipated. The envoys, both Franciscans and Dominicans, had been ill received, and treated with contempt and insolence, and the missives that they brought back were in some measure a declaration of war to all nations.

The Mongol chiefs, however, became by that means acquainted with the Franks, and appeared to understand how important it would be to make common cause with them against the Mussulmans, and to enter into their views on the question of the affairs of the East. They soon sought, therefore, to enter into relation with them.

St. Louis had embarked at Aigues-Mortes on the 25th of August, 1248. He had just arrived at Nicotia, the capital of the isle of Cyprus, and was preparing to go on to Egypt, when an audience was asked of him by two individuals named David and Mark, who stated themselves to be envoys from Iltchikadai, the successor of Baidjou in the command of the forces in Persia. Considering that the proposed French expedition against the Mussulmans would accord perfectly well with the interests of the Tartars, their leader had sent them, they said, to concert measures for a simultaneous attack.*

They delivered to St. Louis a letter which was translated to him into Latin from the Persian by André de Lonjumel, a Dominican monk, who had known David some years before, when he accompanied Friar Anselm to the camp of Baidjou. The letters of Iltchikadai represented the Grand Khan as a zealous convert to Christianity, disposed to favour in all things the professors of that religion. The King, Saint Louis, having inquired what circumstances had induced him to em-

* Tandis que le roi sejournoit en Chippre, le grant roy de Tartarie envoya par devers lui son ambassade, qui moult lui dirent de bonnes paroles et debonnaires, entre lesquelles paroles lui mandoit le roy de Tartarie qu'il estoit tout prest à son command, à lui aider à conquerir la terre sainte, et delivrer Jerusalem des mains des Sarrazins et payens. Le roi reçut benignement icelle ambassade.—*Joinville*, "Hist. de Saint Louis," p. 25.

brace the faith, was told that Couyouk had had a Christian mother, and that his conversion had been occasioned by her exhortations, and those of a holy bishop named *Malassias*, from whom he had received baptism, on the day of the Epiphany, along with eighteen sons of kings, and many lords of the court. They admitted, however, that amongst the Tartars there were a great many who were not baptized, but they affirmed that Iltchikadai had been so long a time; adding that, though he was not of the blood royal, he was very powerful. Saint Louis having asked what could possibly be the motive of Baidjou for giving the ambassadors of the holy see so bad a reception, they replied that Baidjou was not a Christian, but a Pagan, and surrounded by Mussulman counsellors; but that his power had been much diminished, since he was now subordinate in command to Iltchikadai. Such is the substance of the statements made by these ambassadors, and it will be seen that they contain a tissue not only of exaggerations, but of gross falsehoods, along with some few particulars worthy of confidence.

The letter of Iltchikadai to the King of France is of precisely the same character. Here is the translation:

"The words of Iltchikadai, lieutenant of the Khan, king of the universe, by the power of the Most High, to the great king of many provinces, the valiant defender of the world, the victorious Sword of Christendom, Protector of the Apostolic Religion, Son of the Gospel, and King of France. May God enlarge her territories, and preserve him long to his kingdom, and accomplish his will, according to the law, and according to the word, now and in future, by the divine truth, the guide of men, of prophets, and of apostles. Amen.

"A hundred thousand salutations and a hundred thousand benedictions: May God give me grace to see the great and magnificent king, who has arrived from beyond the sea, and that we may be able to meet and unite with one another in charity. May his Majesty perceive by this letter, that our

intention is no other than the welfare of Christianity. I pray God that he will be pleased to give the victory to the Christians, and to make them triumph over all the enemies of the cross. We are come with power and commandment to deliver the Christians from all servitude, pains, and tribute, that they may be honoured and respected, and that no one may touch their goods. That their churches may be rebuilt, that the brazen tables* may sound, that divine worship may flourish, that no one in future may undertake to hinder the Christians from praying to God in peace for the reign of the Great Khan.

"We are advancing, by the grace of the Almighty, for the welfare, the preservation, and the salvation of Christians; and we have sent to you two venerable and faithful men, David and Mark, to announce to you these good news, and to beg you, as your son, to listen to their words and to give credit to our letters.

"The king of the earth—may he be exalted—commands that there shall be, according to the law of God, no difference between the Latin, the Greek, the Armenian, the Nestorian, and the Jacobite,—in a word, between all those who adore the cross; for all those are but one in our eyes. We also pray your royal magnificence not to make any distinction or difference between them, but that his piety and clemency may extend over all Christians and endure for ever."

This letter was received quite unsuspectingly by Louis IX., and he sent one copy of it to Queen Blanche and another to Pope Innocent IV., by his legate the Cardinal Eude de Chateau Raoul. The Christians of that time were too eager to believe the Tartars ready to embrace Christianity and assist them against the Mahommedans, not to give credit rather too hastily, to whatever favoured that opinion. The letter, however, and the information given by the Tartars to St. Louis,

* The Oriental Christians made use of these instead of bells.

must have appeared surprising. Was this singular embassy really despatched by the Mongol commander, or was it a daring enterprise of some bold adventurers? Was the letter authentic? Could there be any truth in this marvellous story of the conversion of the Grand Khan, his tributary kings, as well as of Iltchikadai himself?

The style of the letter, in the first place, differs widely from the haughty laconic manner affected by the Tartars. There are in it formulas of respect and humility, such as at that period the most powerful monarch upon earth would hardly have obtained from the pettiest of the Tartar chiefs. It is to be observed, also, that while it contains little or nothing of what could be interesting to Mongols, it insists upon matters of which they had scarcely any cognizance, such as the differences of Christian sects,—Latins, Greeks, Armenians, Nestorians, and Jacobites.

The request to the King of France, that he will make no difference between Roman Catholic and Oriental schismatics, looks very much more as if it came from the schismatics themselves than from a general, who, even supposing him to be converted, could know nothing of the dissensions that rent the Church, or could take no interest in them if he did.

The accuracy, nevertheless, of some facts alluded to in this missive must be acknowledged—of those, for example, of the privileges granted to the Christians by the Mongols; and the purpose of the embassy, as explained *vivâ voce* by the messenger, is not in itself improbable, as it agrees perfectly well with the political system that the Mongols had necessarily to maintain in their relations with the Franks and Mussulmans. Their design was to attack the Caliph, and they begged the king to march upon Egypt, in order to prevent the Egyptians from coming to the aid of the enemy with whom they were engaged. Such a diversion would be in perfect accordance with their views and interests. It is also to be borne in mind that the chief of the embassy was a known man; André de

Longumel had himself seen him with the Tartar general, and it does not appear very probable that this man, who had a certain position to maintain, would have had the effrontery to come without any mission, and attempt to impose upon the King of France thus grossly. If the fraud should be discovered, as sooner or later it must be, he could no longer hope to find an asylum either among the Franks whom he had insulted, or among the Mongols, of whose name he had made so unwarrantable a use.

All these contradictions may, however, be reconciled by a very simple supposition—namely, that David and his companions were in fact sent by Iltchikadai to concert measures with the Franks against the Mussulmans; but that they had not been furnished with written credentials, or only with one of those pompous decrees which the lieutenants of the Grand Khan were in the habit of sending to the princes with whom they had to communicate. As a paper of this sort, if they had it, would not appear very likely to effect its purpose, the envoys might have forged another, into which they could easily slip such expressions as would please the Christians, and dispose them to favor the Tartars.

They would not dare, however, to put into writing the account of the conversion of the Grand Khan, and therefore they contented themselves with relating that verbally. Assuming that this might be the explanation of the affair, we shall see in it the first example of the method afterwards pursued in all negotiations with Tartar princes.

The letters furnished to ambassadors, not seeming to them likely to secure the good will of those to whom they were addressed, they falsified them, added to them, and, in short, interpreted them altogether in their own fashion. For this reason the translations of these letters differ widely from the originals, and often contain only the substance of them amplyfied, embellished, and decorated in all sorts of ways that might seem likely to please the European princes.

Whilst St. Louis was at Cyprus with the Tartar envoys, a letter addressed by the Constable of Armenia, who had been making a journey in Tartary to the King of Cyprus, was communicated to him. This letter contains some curious details, and on the whole agrees tolerably well with that of Iltchikadai. We copy it from Bergeron:—

"*To the Excellent and Puissant Prince Henry of Lusignan, by the Grace of God, King of Cyprus, to the Queen his Sister, and to her noble Brother Yves de Ibelin, the Constable of Armenia sends health and greeting.*

"You must know, that having undertaken this journey for the honour of God, and the good of Christianity, it has pleased Jesus Christ to bring me to the town of Samarcand. Having visited several countries, and left the Indies behind us, we traversed the countries of Shadah, in which we employed about two months of travel.

"I noticed several cities destroyed by the Tartars, the grandeur and riches of which must have been inestimable. I saw many remarkable mountains composed of the bones of those whom the Tartars had put to death; and it seemed to us that if God had not willed it thus, and that the Tartars who have thus destroyed the pagans had not come, all these nations might have conquered and overrun all those that are beyond the sea.

"As for the Tartars, you know that they are in such numbers that they cannot be counted. They are very good archers, of terrible appearance, and various kinds of faces. It would be very difficult to describe to you in detail their manners and modes of life. For eight months we did nothing else, night and day, but march; and yet we were given to understand that with all that, we did not get more than half way to the country where the Tartar emperor resides. We made out for certain that Couyouk, father of the Khan at present reigning, has been dead these five years. But the lords and barons of Tartary are scattered so widely apart, that during these five years they have not been able to assemble to crown their emperor; for some were in the Indies, some in China and other countries.

"We found a great number of Christians scattered about the East, and many ancient churches, lofty and well built, which the Tartars had destroyed, though the Christians went to the Khan, who received them with great honour, set them at liberty, and forbid, under the severest penalties, that any one should offend them by word or deed. And since for our sins it happened that there was no one who could preach the faith of Jesus Christ, he has been pleased to make himself manifest here by many miracles, so that now all these people believe in him.

"But in the country of the Indies, where the blessed apostle St. Thomas preached, and made converts, there is still a Christian king, who was much oppressed by the Saracen kings, his neighbours, who were continually making war upon him, until when the Tartars came into these countries and he put

himself under their command, and joining his arms to theirs, did attack, and so entirely defeat the Saracens his enemies, that he conquered a great part of India; and at the present day this country is full of Mahometan slaves, for I have myself seen more than five thousand of them whom this king had taken and sold by public auction.

"You must know also that his Holiness has sent ambassadors to the Grand Khan, to know whether he was a Christian or not, and why he sent his armies for the ruin and destruction of the world; but the Khan made answer, that God had commanded his ancestors and him to do so,—to send out his men of war to exterminate all wicked and perverse nations; and as to the question whether he was a Christian or not, he answered that God knew, and that if the Pope wished to know, he must come and see."

Such is the narrative of the Constable of Armenia, and it agrees very well with the letter of Iltchikadai as to what concerns the good disposition of the Grand Khan towards the Christians. Between the Emperor of the Tartars and the French king there was certainly in so far a community of interest opposed to the Mussulmans; and there appeared, therefore, some ground for the expectation that the expedition of St. Louis would be undertaken in concert with the Tartars. What might have been the consequences of such an alliance, it would be difficult to calculate. Possibly the Mussulman power might have been entirely broken and destroyed; but it is also within the limits of possibility that Europe would have fallen entirely under the yoke of the Tartars, and God knows what aspect Europe might now present if the Mongol characteristics had been added to so many other elements of barbarism.

St. Louis hastened to reply to the communication, real or supposed, of the Tartar prince Iltchikadai, by sending off an embassy composed of three Dominicans, André de Longumel, Jean de Carcassonne, and William. The first, a Frenchman by birth, was acquainted, says Joinville, with the Saracen language, had previously accompanied Brother Anselm to the camp of Baidjou. Two secular clerks and two of the king's officers were added to the party, one of whom, J. Colunna, in his "Sea of Histories," states himself to have

known in his extreme old age. He was then sub-chanter in the church of Chartres, and was named Robert.*

David had hinted to King Louis that the most acceptable gift to the Mongol emperor would be a chapel in the form of a tent, and the king sent him one; "very rich and well made, of fine scarlet, and embroidered in needlework with all the articles of our faith; the Annunciation of the angel Gabriel, the Nativity, the Baptism, the Passion, the Ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. He also sent books, chalices, ornaments, and all things needful for the celebration of the Mass, and he did so to try whether he could not attract the King of Tartary and his people to our faith and creed."†

King Louis even bestowed on the Mongol sovereign, and his general Iltchikadai, a much-valued relic, namely, a piece of the wood of the true cross.

The letters he addressed to them are said by some to have invited the Khan, hitherto a pagan, to follow the example of his mother and his grandfather, and embrace the true faith. Others, who assume that the Khan's conversion had already been effected, say that they merely exhorted him and Iltchi kadai to fulfil the duties owed to him, who by his grace had called them to the knowledge of his holy name, and to persevere in them with fervour. The Pope's legate also wrote to the Grand Khan, his mother and his commander in Persia, to announce to them that the Holy Roman Church had heard with joy of their conversion, and receiving them into the number of her dear children, exhorted them to preserve inviolate the orthodox faith, to acknowledge the Church of Rome as the mother of all churches, and its head as the Vicar of Jesus Christ, whom all who profess the Christian faith are bound to obey.

Provided with these documents, which were certainly likely to astonish not a little the court of Kara-Koroum, the monks

* "Mare historiarum mon. Lat.," fol. 412.
† Joinville, "Hist. de St. Louis," p. 25.

set off from Cyprus, accompanied by the Tartar envoys, on the 27th of January, 1248.

The embassy traversed Persia on their way to the camp of Iltchikadai, and thence proceeded to the Mongol court, which they reached towards the end of that year, or the beginning of the next. "The messengers," says Joinville, "put to sea, and disembarked at the port of Antioch; and to travel from there, to the place where the great King of Tartary was, took them a year. They went ten leagues a day, and they found all the lands that they traversed subject to the Tartars; and in the countries they passed they found, in many places, heaps of ruins that had been towns or cities, as well as piles of dead men's bones."*

When the envoys of St. Louis arrived at the imperial court, Couyouk was dead, but had not yet been replaced by a successor; and it was the Queen Regent Ogoul who received them. This princess and her son, having seen the king's presents, received the monks with distinction, but interpreted their coming into an acknowledgment on the part of the King of France that he was tributary to the Tartars. The presents were, therefore, accepted as tokens of submission to the authority which the Kha-kan arrogated to himself over all the sovereigns of the earth. According to Joinville, the Khan also afterwards showed the tent to other princes whom he wished to subjugate, saying that the King of France had acknowledged allegiance to him, and had sent him that in pledge of his fidelity; and that several princes were really by that means induced to submit.

In return for the gifts she had received, the Regent Ogoul presented to the envoys various articles, amongst which was, according to Chinese custom, a piece of silk stuff. She afterwards dismissed them with honour, but without their having obtained any positive answer as to the principal object of

* "Hist. de St. Louis," p. 90.

their journey, namely the conversion of the Mongol princes. They were even charged with a letter to King Louis, in which the Khan* demanded that he should send an annual tribute in gold and silver, and threatening, in case of refusal, that he should be *put to the sword*, as he, the Khan, had done many other kings, and destroyed them and their people. Here is the letter as reported by Joinville:—

"A good thing is peace; for in a land of peace those who go on four feet peaceably eat the grass, and those who go on two cultivate the ground, whence they peaceably obtain the fruits; and thus we say to you to warn you, for you cannot have peace if you do not get it from us; and as for such and such kings (naming many), we have put them all to the sword. Therefore we command you to send us so much of your gold and silver every year, and then you may keep us as friends; and if you do not do so, we will destroy you and your people, as we have done those whom we have named."

This menacing letter is quite in the customary style of the horde of Kara-Koroum, and quite in accordance with that still maintained by the Chinese. St. Louis sends an ambassador, —therefore he acknowledges himself tributary; his presents are a token of his submission to the Tartars. This has always been the mode of reasoning adopted at the court of the Son of Heaven; and the Mongols certainly employed no other.

It may easily be imagined that King Louis little expected such a result from his embassy, "and much repented of having sent it."†

The ambassadors returned in two years from the time of their departure, and found the king in the town of Acre. Their narratives and descriptions must doubtless have keenly excited the curiosity of the Crusaders, who were themselves exposed to so many similar adventures. Among other marvellous

* Probably a prince associated temporarily with Ogoul in the regency.

† Joinville, "Hist. de St. Louis," p. 102.

things, they related to King Louis a story of a prince of a Mongol tribe, whom they had seen in Tartary, who had been converted to Christianity by a miracle. The story, which is reported by Mosheim,* though only as a silly fable, is that the prince in question, being ill of violent fever, was one night seized with a fit of delirium, and escaping from his tent, while all around him were buried in deep sleep, wandered away into the desert, and remained wandering for three days. On the fourth night his delirium left him, and he was very much frightened to find himself in darkness in an unknown place, and knew not what to do, or which way to turn. Suddenly, however, the darkness was dispersed, and he saw on the summit of a mountain a resplendent light. He advanced towards it, crawling up the mountain on his hands and knees, and there perceived an innumerable multitude of men, remarkable for the beauty of their faces, and the magnificence of their attire. In the centre, on an elevated spot, was a golden throne, on which was seated a celestial king, distinguished above all the rest by the still greater beauty of his face, and the superior splendour of his robes; and having seated at his right hand a queen of the same indescribable loveliness and glory. The celestial king exhorted the Tartar to embrace the Christian faith; and accordingly, as soon as he had made his way back to his people, and related what he had seen, he did so. Both Raynald† and Joinville repeat this story, and it certainly agrees very well with the statement made by the Constable of Armenia to Henry de Lusignan, King of Cyprus—that Jesus Christ manifested himself in Tartary by many miracles. Mosheim‡ appends to it the following remark:—"Every reasonable person must see that this ridiculous adventure was invented by the monks, King Louis's ambassadors. This is evident from their representing the Virgin Mary as the Queen

* Lepidam hic adjiciam fabulam. "Hist. Tart. Eccl." p. 52.

† Odor Raynald, "Annales, vol. 18. No. 89. p. 588.

‡ Mosheim, p. 53.

of Heaven,—which certainly Jesus Christ never declared her to be. They would have been wiser to place her simply among the saints, if they wished to gain credit for their story."

Mosheim is a Protestant writer, but that is no reason for agreeing in his absolute rejection of this miracle, merely on the ground that Jesus Christ did not declare the Holy Virgin Queen of Heaven. The worthy monks related in all simplicity what they heard; and they could not well foresee, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, that three hundred years afterwards Luther would aim to reform the Church, and protest against the Catholic faith. The simple narrative of the ambassadors of St. Louis may appear, to some, less ridiculous than the refutation of Mosheim,—an erudite historian, however, though over-sharp in his strictures upon Catholics.

CHAPTER VI.

State of Christianity among the Mongols. — Rubruk, the new Ambassador of St. Louis to Tartary. — Manners of the Tartars. — Hardships and Miseries of the Route. — Camp of Sartak. — The Monks at the Court of Batou. — They proceed to the Imperial Court of Mangou-Khan. — Incidents of the Journey. — The Grand Khan gives Audience to the Envoys of St. Louis. — Singular mixtures of Religions among the Tartars. — Aspect of Kara-Koroum. — Solemn Discussion among the Missionaries. — The Buddhists and the Mussulmans. — The French Missionaries quit the Court of the Emperor of Tartary. — Letter of Mangou-Khan to St. Louis. — Return of Rubruk to France.

The ambassadors sent by King Louis to Tartary had found there a great number of Christians, though unfortunately in a state of profound ignorance, and somewhat loose in their morals.

They were mostly Nestorians, though without knowing it, and showed no spirit of exclusiveness, offering their commu

nion freely to the Catholics, acknowledging without hesitation that the Church of Rome was the mother of all other churches, and even saying that they ought to have received their patriarch from the Pope, if the road to Rome had been open. The Tartars and the Khan himself were full of respect for the name of Jesus Christ, and willingly did homage to the Cross. Mangou, who had now succeeded Couyouk on the imperial throne, showed great favour to the Christians, and, indeed, was generally supposed to be a Christian himself. Hayton, of Armenia, affirms it in the most positive manner; but we shall have occasion bye and bye to discuss this question; and it is at least certain that the Mangou's mother, a person greatly respected among the Tartars, was of that faith, and also the emperor's secretary, who possessed great influence at court, and who had obtained an exemption from any kind of tax for those who undertook to lead a religious kind of life.

It may be supposed, therefore, that these people would not have been unlikely to receive the faith, if it had been preached to them; but they had few bishops among them, and in some localities none were ever seen. The Nestorian bishops also were incapable of converting these people to true Christianity, and they bestowed no pains on the formation of a native clergy, even sometimes conferring the sacerdotal character on boys under age.

These details were well known in the West; and St. Louis, who ardently desired the advancement of the Christian faith, thought it would be very desirable to raise to the episcopal dignity the monks of the order of St. Dominic and St. Francis, who were destined to preach the gospel in Tartary. He wrote on the subject to the pope, and on the 20th of February, 1253, the sovereign pontiff sent to the Bishop of Tusculum, his legate at the French court, to do what he should think desirable for the good of the country, with which he was better acquainted than most others.*

* Odor Raynald, ad ann. 1253. No. 49. p. 685.

Amongst the Tartars who had embraced Christianity, much was said of a Prince Sartak, the son of Batou, and who held his court somewhere between the Tanais and the Volga. A person named John, who called himself a priest and the chaplain of Sartak, came one day to Rome, to Pope Innocent IV., and assured him that that Mongol chief had renounced idolatry and received holy baptism.

He did not bring any letters, but he accounted for this by stating that he had been arrested by Conrad in Sicily, and kept in prison, where he had lost his credentials, and all that he possessed, but had recovered his liberty on the death of Conrad. The Pope gave credit to his narrative, and wrote to Sartak, to congratulate him on his conversion, to exhort him to proclaim boldly the faith which he had embraced, and to beg him to allow his subjects to listen to those who came to preach the gospel to them.

The rumour of the conversion of Sartak spread into Palestine in 1252, and rejoiced greatly all the Christians, and more especially King Louis. Notwithstanding the affront offered to him by the Regent Ogoul, in her false interpretation of his former proceeding, he resolved to hazard a new attempt, and write to Sartak letters of peace and amity, to instruct him in the articles of the faith, to give him counsel on affairs relating to Christianity, and to beg him to be the friend of Christians, and the enemy of their enemies, and in all things to do honour to the Holy Cross. It is beautiful to see this great monarch, not content with perilling his own life and that of his subjects, for the deliverance of the Holy Land, also taking the initiative in these distant missions for the propagation of the faith.

This new mission to Tartary was committed to the charge of two Franciscan monks, William of Rubruk,* sometimes known as Rubruquis, and Bartholomew of Cremona; and in order to protect the dignity of King Louis, they did not pro-

* He was born in Brabant, about 1220.

fess to have received their orders from any one but their own superiors. They went in the first place from Acre to Constantinople, which was then in the hands of the Franks; and Rubruk, preaching at St. Sophia, declared, as it had been agreed he should do, that he was going to Tartary to preach the gospel to the infidels, according to the rules of the Minorite Friars; and such was the aspect that he endeavoured to give to his mission throughout his whole journey.

The ambassadors embarked on the 7th of May, 1253, in a vessel that took them to Soldaya, and there found that some Constantinople merchants who had preceded them had, notwithstanding what Rubruk had said at St. Sophia, announced them in the quality of ambassadors. The Franciscan diplomatist endeavoured, however, to persuade the inhabitants of the place that he had no claim to the dignity.

At Soldaya, Rubruk completed the organisation of his caravan for the long and perilous journey he was about to undertake. He procured eight covered carts, two of which were to serve for beds, and five saddle-horses, for the little party composed of the two monks, an interpreter, a guide, and a servant.

"In the third day after leaving Soldaya," says Rubruk in the account he gave to St. Louis after his return, "we met with the Tartars, and when I had seen them, and observed their manners, it seemed to me as if I were entering a new world; and before pursuing my journey, I will endeavour to describe to your Majesty, as well as I can, something of the fashions and manners of life of those people."

It may be interesting to compare the picture drawn by the Franciscan monks of the Tartars of the thirteenth century, with that which modern missionaries have endeavoured to trace, after traversing the steppes of Mongolia, and we will, therefore, follow the ambassador of St. Louis through some of his details.*

* "Relation des Voyages en Tartarie." Bergeron.

"The Tartars," says Rubruk, "have no permanent abodes, and never know where they may be the next day; though every chief of a horde knows the bounds of his pasture grounds, and whereabouts he ought to be, according to the season of the year. When winter comes they descend towards the south, and in summer go up again to the cold regions of the north. The houses they inhabit are placed upon wheels, and constructed of a kind of wooden lattice work, with an opening at the top that serves for a chimney. This wooden frame is generally covered with white felt, plastered with lime or powdered bones; but sometimes these houses are black. Before the entrance there is suspended a piece of felt, enriched with paintings, representing flowers, trees, birds, and fantastic animals.

"These dwellings are sometimes thirty feet long, and Rubruk counted as many as twenty-two oxen harnessed to one of them. These great cabins are, however, only for chiefs; common people have much smaller ones, and of a conical shape, but also placed on four wheels; and when the tribe is on a march, the carts drawn by a single ox or camel are attached one to another, so that a single person is able to guide a long caravan of them.

"When the Tartars stop to encamp in any place, they always turn the doors of their dwellings towards the south; the master's bed is placed to the north, and the women occupy the eastern part; and a man entering the tent, must take care never to hang up his bow and quiver on the women's side. Above the place of the head of the family, there is always a small image, a kind of doll made of felt, and called 'the brother of the lord of the house,' and another on the other side, denominated in like manner 'the brother of the mistress.' A little above, and between these two dolls, there is a third, a very small and meagre one, which is considered the guardian of the house in general. There is besides, on the women's side, a figure of a cow, because it is their business to milk

cows; and on the men's another image representing a mare, as the milking the mares falls to the men's share.

"On festival days, when the Tartars assemble to drink *kumys*, they begin by sprinkling the image over the head of the master, and then all the others successively. A boy afterwards goes out of the tent with a cupfull, and pours out a portion three times towards the south, accompanying each libation with a genuflexion.

"This rite is to do honour to fire; he then repeats the ceremony towards the east, the west, and the north, in honour of the air, the water, and the deceased ancestors.

"Before drinking, the master of the house dips his finger in the cup, and sprinkles the ground with some drops of kumys; or if he happens to be on horseback, he throws them on his horse's mane.

"The ordinary drink of the Tartars is *kumys*, a spirit made of mare's milk. They pour the milk into a large leathern vessel, and, when they have got a considerable quantity, beat it till it begins to ferment like new wine. When it becomes quite sour, they beat it again violently, and then draw off the buttery part. The fermented whey makes a brisk sort of liquor, with an agreeable almond flavour, very intoxicating to those not much accustomed to it. The Tartars also make from goat's milk a kind of butter which they boil and keep for winter use in goats' skins, and, though they put no salt in it, it never spoils. After they have taken off the butter, they boil the curd again to make cheese, which they dry in the sun, and which is as hard as iron; these cheeses they put into sacks for the winter store, and when the supply of milk becomes scanty, they put this hard, sour curd into a leathern vessel, pour hot water upon it, and beat it till it liquefies; and with this acid they have to content themselves during the time of year so severely felt by pastoral nations.*

* All these customs still exist amongst the Tartars.

"The Tartars live chiefly on their flocks, and the produce of the chase. When they intend to go hunting, they assemble in great numbers in the neighbourhood of the country where they know there is game, and forming an immense circle, which they gradually draw closer, they enclose the game as in a net, and then kill it with arrows.

"The beginning of winter is the season for the grand imperial hunts, which are conducted like great military expeditions.

"Parties are first sent out to discover whereabouts the game is most abundant, and, according to their report, orders are dispatched to all the tribes encamped within a circle of a month's journey, to let a certain number of their men be employed in forming a circle and chasing the game towards an appointed spot. These troops are organised into right, left, and centre division; and during the march the officers make frequent reports to the Khan of the game that has been found, and the place to which it has been driven. The circle of hunters, at first immense, is then narrowed, till they stand shoulder to shoulder round the enclosure, a space perhaps of two or three leagues, marked by pieces of felt suspended to cords. The hunters are obliged to be very careful to keep their ranks, that the game may not escape; and the smallest negligence in this respect is punished with the bastinado. The emperor comes first into the enclosure with his wives, and amuses himself with shooting an immense number of animals of all kinds; when he is tired of slaughter, he retires to some elevated spot within the enclosure, whence he may witness the performance of the princes and generals. After them, officers of a lower rank may enjoy the sport, and last of all the common men; and the affair lasts for several days, when the old men present themselves to the emperor as suppliants for whatever game may have escaped the carnage, though some animals are allowed to escape, in order to multiply and furnish material for future hunts.

"The flocks and herds of the Tartars consist of sheep

goats, oxen, camels, and especially horses, which furnish their habitual food, and constitute the chief part of their wealth. They eat, however, the flesh of all animals, and preserve it for a long time by cutting it into thin slices, and drying it in the air, or in the smoke of their fires.

"These people are under the necessity of constant migrations, in order to seek fresh pastures for their cattle, and as soon as the grass has been eaten from the district where they are encamped, they load their animals with their household goods and young children, and go to seek fresh fields and pastures, no matter in what direction. In the spring they proceed to the mountains, and when the cold season comes they return to the plains. At that time the cattle have no food but what they can obtain by scratching away the snow with their feet, and when a severe frost succeeds a thaw, so that the ground becomes covered with ice, the animals which cannot break the ice perish of hunger. Horses, which are least exposed to this danger, on account of the great strength of their legs, always form a large proportion of the Tartar herds, and the care of them is the principal branch of Tartar economy.

"The cotton and silk stuffs, embroidered in gold or silver, which the wealthy Tartars wear in summer, come from China and Persia; the costly furs that they wrap themselves in, in winter, chiefly from Russia and Bulgaria. Their usual plan in the winter is to wear two pelisses, one with the hair inward, the other with it turned out; and they are thus protected against wind and snow. These outer pelisses are of sheep or goat's skin for the poor, and of fox or wolf's skin for the rich; or sometimes the latter line them with silk or cotton wadding, or fine wool.

"The warmest kind of wool is kept for making felt, of which there is a great consumption, as it is used for carpets, for coverings for the Yourtas or huts, and for cloaks to keep off the rain and snow.

"The Tartar dress is in the form of a tunic, clasped always on the right side, though the Turks constantly fasten theirs on the left. The costume of the women does not differ greatly from that of the men, except that they wear a very lofty head-dress, of which Rubruk enters into a very minute detail, and adds, 'When you see a company of these women on horseback, you might take them for men-at-arms with helmet and lance, especially as they ride astride.'

"It is the business of the women to pitch the tents, and the rolling habitations above described; to milk the cows, make the butter, prepare the skins, and sew them with thread which they make themselves from the hair of the camel or yak; and beside these employments, to make shoes, boots and garments of all kinds.

"They never wash their clothes, saying that God is angry if they do, and sends thunder while they are hanging up to dry. The sound of thunder terrifies them so much, that when they hear it they hide themselves under their felt carpets, and remain buried thus till it is over.

"The men occupy themselves in making bows and arrows, saddles, bridles, bits and spurs. They take care of the camels, load and unload them for a journey, and in general look after the cattle, and tan the hides.

"Cleanliness is in no more favour with them than with their ladies, and their mode of washing their faces and hands, is by filling their mouths with water and squirting it out over them. They never clean any of their domestic utensils, unless, indeed, when they are boiling meat; they then sometimes dip into the pot the bowls they eat from, wash them with the liquor, and then pour it back into the cauldron."

These details from the narrative of Rubruk are nearly the same that might be given, at the present day, concerning the nomadic people of Tartary; for these formidable shepherds, after having invaded and ravaged the world, have resumed, in

the midst of their immeasurable steppes, the wandering life of their forefathers.

The portraits, too, which the missionaries of the middle ages have left us, of the physical characteristics of the Tartars, may be recognised, feature for feature, in the Mongols of the present day. John de Plano Carpini has described Tartary as the country of men of middle size, with broad flat faces, prominent cheek bones, short flat noses, little eyes, placed obliquely, and separated by a great space, with the beard scanty or entirely wanting: a portrait of such precision, says M. d'Avezac*, that no modern naturalist could improve on it, with respect to the external characteristics of the Mongols. Another monk has left us a picture no less striking, a little satirical perhaps, but not the worse likeness for that.

"After leaving Turkey," says the lively Friar Ricold†, "we entered Tartary, where we met with that wonderful and horrid people, the Tartars, who differ so much in person, manners, and mode of life, from all the nations in the world. They differ in person, for they have great broad faces, and eyes so little and narrow, that they look only like small slits in their faces; they are without beards, and many of them look exactly like upright old baboons.

"In manners they differ from other nations, for they have neither courtesy, nor modesty, nor love nor agreeableness. They seem to think themselves the owners of all cities, edifices, and habitations; for wherever they find them, they destroy them, and do most harm to those who humble themselves before them. They desire that one should pay them all honour, reverence, and service, and even then they do not take it in good part, but say that all is due to them. They say that they are the true lords of the earth, and that God

* "Relation des Monghols ou Tartares," p. 524. The admirable work of M. d'Avezac has furnished us with many valuable details, especially on the obscure question of Prester John. This learned geographer has thoroughly studied the Mongols of the middle ages.

† "Peregrinacion de Frere Ricold de l'Ordre les Frères Pescheurs." Feuillet, 36.

made the world expressly for them, in order that they might rule over and enjoy it; they say that the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, only eat and drink by permission of their emperor. And once it happened that a Frenchman came to the Khan of Tartary, and the emperor asked him what offering he had brought him; the Frenchman replied, 'Sire, I have brought you nothing, for I did not know of your great power.' 'How,' said the emperor, 'did not the very birds, as they flew over the country, tell you of our power?' The Frenchman replied, 'Sire, perhaps they did, but as I do not understand their language, I did not know what they said;' and thus the emperor was appeased."

Such were the arrogant people, that, in the fifteenth century, seemed for a time to hold in its hands the destinies of the world.

"When we entered," says Rubruk, "among these barbarous nations, it seemed to me that we had come into another world, The first time we met them, after having kept us waiting a long time, while they were sitting in the shade of their black waggons, they suddenly surrounded us on their horses.

"The first thing they asked us was, whether we had ever been among them before, and on our answering no, they impudently demanded our victuals. We gave them some of the biscuit and wine that we had brought, but when they had emptied one bottle, they asked for another, and said, laughing, that 'a man could not get into a house with one foot.' When they inquired whence we came, and where we were going to, I replied, that having heard say that Prince Sartak was a Christian, I intended to seek him. Thereupon they asked whether I came of my own accord, or whether I was sent by another. I replied, that no one had obliged me to come, and that I should never have come if I had not desired it; so that, I might say, it was of my own accord, though with the knowledge and permission of my superior; for I took good care not to say I was sent by your Majesty. After

that, they inquired what we carried in our carts, whether it was gold or silver, or rich garments for Sartak.

"I replied that Sartak would see for himself when we got to him, and that it was not their business to know. They kept us waiting a long time before they would take us to their chief, asking us perpetually for presents; for biscuits for their little children, for knives, gloves, buckles, tags, indeed for every thing we had. They admired all, and wanted all. I excused myself from giving, on the ground that, having a very long journey to go, we could not deprive ourselves of necessary things; but they told me I was a liar. It is their custom to demand impudently and importunately whatever they see; and when we got free of them, we seemed to have escaped from real demons."

From the time of their leaving Soldaya to their arrival at the camp of Sartak, a journey of two months, the monks never slept in a house, nor even under a tent, but always in the open air, or under their waggons. They never came to any villages, or buildings, but only to immense *tumuli*, filled with human bones. They stopped from time to time at Tartar encampments, where the attempts at extortion were always repeated, and presents demanded for the chief, so that the little store of wine and biscuit that our poor ambassadors had laid in, decreased with distressing rapidity.

On reaching the camp of Scakatay, one of Sartak's officers, they found the Tartar seated on a divan, with his wife by his side, and a guitar in his hand; "and I really thought," says Rubruk, "that his nose had been cut off, so flat was it, and that part of his face, as well as his eyebrows, were rubbed with a kind of black ointment, which was very frightful to look on."*

The Tartars were as curious about news as they were eager for presents, and Scakatay never left off teasing Rubruk to

* Bergeron, p. 43.

know what was in the letters that he was taking to Sartak; but the prudent diplomatist would only reply that the letters were sealed up, but that, doubtless, they contained only kind and amiable words. The Mongol then desired to know what they meant to say to Sartak when they should meet him, and on their replying that they had only to speak to him concerning the Christian religion, he said he should like to hear that speech.

"Then," says Rubruk, "I declared to him, as well as I could, by means of our interpreter, who was not at all eloquent, and rather stupid, what belongs to the faith; and he listened to it all, but when he had done so only shook his head, and said nothing."

The envoys of St. Louis were as zealous missionaries as they were prudent ambassadors, and as they went along, they preached, as well as they could, to these barbarous races, concerning the truths of the Gospel. They met Christians in many places, but mostly plunged in the most profound ignorance, and given to ridiculous superstitions. Some Muscovite and Hungarian believers, for instance, were persuaded they could never be saved if they drank kumys, and they regarded such an act as equivalent to apostacy. The Franciscan monks endeavoured to enlighten them on this point, but without success. They were so convinced that kumys was forbidden to Christians, that a Saracen, whom Rubruk was endeavouring to convert, declined being baptized on this very ground. He had been carefully instructed in evangelical truths; he manifested an excellent disposition, and all things were prepared for the performance of the ceremony, when he suddenly leaped on his horse, and galloped off, saying he must go home and consult his wife. He returned the next day to tell the missionaries that he must not be made a Christian, for then it would be impossible for him to drink kumys, and that in these deserts he could not live without it. This notion had been inculcated by the Russians, then very numerous in

Tartary, and the Franciscan monks bravely endeavoured to remove the prejudice. Rubruk and his companions had much to suffer from hunger and thirst through the whole direction of this toilsome journey, for there was nothing to be bought, and the only kind of food given to them was sour milk, which was sometimes entirely spoiled.

The waters that they came to were so fetid and muddy with the trampling of the horses' hoofs, that it was impossible to drink of them, "so that," says Rubruk, "had it not been for the biscuit that we carried with us, and the mercy of God that helped us, we should have been starved to death."

"We travelled on continually towards the East, seeing nothing on our way but sky and plain, except here and there some burying-places of the Coumans, which we could perceive two leagues off; the interments of a family with all their kindred being always made on the same spot.

"But we were much better off in journeying through the desert, hard as it was sometimes, than when we got to the Tartars' lodgings, which were such that I cannot describe them in words. Sometimes, when we were sitting in the shade of our waggons, on account of the great heat, for it was the month of July, they troubled us much; coming and throwing themselves upon us, pulling us about, and teasing us to show them every thing we brought with us."*

They proceeded thus from camp to camp, through hardships and trials of all kinds, till they reached the banks of the river Tanais (the Don), which they had to cross. Fortunately, they found here some little boats, and managed to place their waggons upon them, by tying two together for each waggon. They got safely over the water, but on reaching the opposite bank, found that their guide had played them a shameful trick. On his assurance that they would find plenty of horses on the other side, they had sent back those they had had, as

* Bergeron, p. 56.

well as their draught oxen; and now they had to wait three whole days on the banks of the river, without being able to procure any.

"The river was very full of fish, but the Tartars do not know how to catch it, and do not care about it, unless it is large enough to cut off lumps, as they do off the carcass of a sheep."

At length, the missionaries found means of continuing their journey, though it had to be on foot, as the only cattle to be procured were wanted to draw their waggons. They walked for three whole days without coming to any human habitation, and both men and oxen were getting thoroughly exhausted, when two horses came up which had been forwarded to them. The guide and the interpreter then mounted and set off on an expedition of discovery, and after riding about for three days, came to a Tartar camp, where they obtained horses and oxen, with which they returned to the missionaries, and finally, at the end of the month of July, they arrived at Sartak's encampment.

They were taken to Coyat, his lieutenant,* and one of the first questions addressed to them was, who was the greatest Lord among the Franks or Christians of the West? Rubruk named the Emperor of Germany, but Coyat replied that it was not he, but the King of France; "for," adds Rubruk, addressing his narrative to king Louis, "he had heard speech of your Majesty by Sir Baldwin of Hamault, and I found there too one of the Knights Templars, who had been in Cyprus, and had told of all that he had seen there." Bergeron doubtless alludes to this when he says, in his preface to the Narrative of Journeys in Tartary, "That which, in these travels of the old monks, is much to be remarked to the honour and glory of France, is that the Tartars, who had rendered themselves so formidable to all the nations of the earth, did not dread any

* This man was a Nestorian Christian.

people so much as our French;" and we may see, in many parts of these narratives, the esteem in which they were held by the Tartars, and what a high notion they had of their military discipline, which they said they wished to learn. This is to be attributed to the reputation the French had of being the best men-at-arms, and the most adroit and chivalrous knights in the world; as even the great Frederic Barbarossa bears witness, in that famous song which he composed in the Provençal language, to the praise of all the nations of Europe, and which was then in vogue through all Christendom, beginning thus:—

"Plas mi cavalier Francez," &c.

The rumour had gained credit, even in the East, that Sartak had become a Christian, but Rubruk was told not to make use of that expression, for that Sartak was *not a Christian, but a Mongol.* It seemed, therefore, that Christian was mistaken for a national designation, an error rather disconcerting to the missionaries, after all they had been thinking on the subject of Sartak's conversion. Sartak certainly had with him, however, some Nestorian priests, who celebrated Christian rites according to the particular tenets of their sect. He had desired, that when the Franciscans were admitted to an audience they should bring with them their books and sacred vessels, and accordingly the monks clothed themselves for the occasion in their richest vestments.

Rubruk held in his hands a beautiful Bible that he had received from King Louis, and a psalter of great price, splendidly illuminated, which the Queen had presented to him; his companion bore a missal and the cross, and the clerk was provided with a censer; and thus they advanced in procession towards the tent of Sartak. The piece of felt that hung before the entrance of the tent was raised, that those within might witness their approach in this grand state; but they were warned to take care, in passing, not to touch the thresh-

old, and advised to raise some benedictory hymn for the prince.

They entered the tent chanting the "*Salve Regina*," and Sartak and his wives examined, with the closest curiosity, the books and vestments of the monks.

"The prince, having taken the Bible, inquired whether that was the Gospel; I replied that that book contained the entire Holy Scriptures; and seeing a figure on the cross, he asked whether that was Jesus Christ. We answered that it was, and we perceived by that that the Nestorian Christians and Armenians never put a figure on their crosses, so that it would seem that either they do not believe in the Passion of the Son of God, or are ashamed of it."

Rubruk profited by this audience to present to Sartak the letters of St. Louis, with two translations, one in Arabic, the other in Syriac; and the prince, having made out their contents, told him that if they wished to remain in the country, they must obtain permission from his father, Batou, and that he would have them sent to his court.

The missionaries were, therefore, obliged to go to the Tartar encampment on the Volga; and Rubruk was surprised to see that it covered as much space as a great city with its suburbs, to the distance of three or four leagues, and contained a multitude of people. In its centre was the dwelling of the prince, with the entrance towards the south, and it was not allowed that any yourtas should be placed before it in that direction, but they were all ranged to the right and left of the royal residence, and from east to west. The tents of Batou's sixteen wives were all on the left, and about a stone's throw from one another. Around these dwellings were those of a great number of women and girls, who attended on the wives of the prince, as well as small huts for storing up their goods; and these were covered with felt smeared with suet or sheep's milk, to keep off the rain. All these little houses were fixed on wheeled trucks, to which horses or oxen could

be harnessed when the camp was to be shifted; and the extremely level character of the ground in these immense plains facilitates this mode of transport.

The monks were conducted to the court of Batou, who had had an immense tent pitched, as his wooden mansion could not contain his court.

"We were warned again," says Rubruck, "not to touch the tent ropes, for they were regarded in the same light as the threshold of the house. We stood there in our robes, barefoot, and bareheaded, about the length of a miserere, and the whole assembly preserved a profound silence. Friar John of Plano Carpini had been there before us.

"Batou was seated on a high seat or throne, about as large as a bed, and all gilt, to which three steps led up. Near him was one of his wives, and at the entrance of the tent was a bench, on which was placed kumys, and three great cups of gold and silver, enriched with jewels. Batou looked at us earnestly, and we observed him with much attention, and it seemed to me that he was much of the figure of Sir John de Beaumont (peace to his soul!), and his face was a little reddish. At length he commanded us to speak, and then our conductor warned us to kneel down. I bent one knee to the ground, as before a man, but they made me a sign that I should bend both, which I did, not daring to disobey, and began my harangue in these words, feeling, in this attitude, as if I were praying to God:—'My lord, we pray God, from all good things proceed, that as He has given you all these temporal advantages, He will, after that, be pleased to give you celestial ones also; inasmuch as the one are vain and useless without the other.'

"He listened very attentively to that, and then I added, 'My lord, you must know that you will never have these last, unless you are a Christian, for God himself has said, "Whosoever will believe, and be baptized, shall be saved; but he who will not believe, shall be damned."' At these words,"

says Rubruk, "the prince smiled a little, and all the Mongols began to clap their hands, at which my interpreter was much afraid; he who ought to have comforted me, so that I should not fear.

"When silence was restored, I said to Batou that I had come to his son because we had heard that he was a Christian, and that I had brought him letters from the King of France, my sovereign lord. Having heard that, he made me rise, and inquired concerning the name of your Majesty, as well as of mine, and those of my companions; and my interpreter presented them to him in writing, and he then told me that he had heard how your Majesty had issued from your country with a great army, to make war. I replied that was true, but that it was to make war on the Saracens, who were occupying the holy city of Jerusalem, and profaning the House of God.

"He asked also whether you had ever sent ambassadors to him, and I answered, No! Then he made us sit down, and gave us milk to drink, which was thought a great favour; and as my eyes were fixed upon the ground, he ordered me to look up, perhaps that he might take a better view of me, but possibly from superstition, since the Tartars regard it as a bad omen when any one seated before them appears sad, and holds his head down, and more especially if he should lean it on his hand."

Louis IX. had, in his letters, asked permission for the monks to remain in Tartary, to preach the Christian faith, but Batou said he would not take it upon him to grant this permission; it must be asked of the Emperor Mangou, who had been proclaimed Kha-kan in 1250. The missionaries were, therefore, requested to continue their journey, for which they were promised the means of transport, as well as provisions.

The Franciscans now pursued their weary way for five weeks more, along the banks of the Volga, almost always on foot,

and very often suffering from want of food, so that Rubruk's companion could not help weeping.

On the 16th of September they left that river and directed their course towards the Ural. The cold had now become intense, and the guide charged to conduct the caravan warned the monks that they would have to travel four months more before reaching the court of Mangou-Khan, and that the frost in those countries was so terrible that it split trees and stones. He then asked them whether they were capable of enduring the hardships of such a journey; and these intrepid missionaries replied, that what other men could endure they, by the grace of God, would be able to endure also. Warmer clothing was then given to them, of a kind adapted to the rigour of this frightful climate, namely, a thick robe and drawers of sheepskin, felt boots and leggings, and large cloaks of the same material. During the whole journey they lived chiefly on millet boiled in water and kumys. Sometimes in the evening they had a little meat, but they were obliged to eat it almost raw, from the want of wood for fuel. "When we stopped at night," says Rubruk, "we could not well go to gather the dung of horses and oxen, and there was hardly anything else to be found of which fire could be made." Travellers through the deserts of Tartary meet in the present day with the very same difficulty.

Rubruk relates that he saw in these solitudes asses that resembled mules, and he probably speaks of the animal called the *hemion*, which we often met with in numerous herds during our journey from Pekin to Lha-ssa, through the Mongolian steppes. This animal is a kind of ass about the size of an ordinary mule, but handsomer, and very light and graceful in its movements. Its skin is, on the back, of a reddish hue, but softened off towards the belly till it is almost white. Its head is large and ungraceful, so as to be quite out of keeping with its body, and when it moves it holds this head with its long ears very erect, and in galloping turns the head in the direc-

tion of the wind, and carries its tail aloft. Its neigh is very loud, clear, and sonorous, and it is so agile that no Tartar or Thibetan horseman can overtake it. These animals are shot by hunters, who place themselves in ambush near the places where they go to drink. Their flesh is excellent food, and their skin serves to make boots. The females are fruitful, and the species is perpetually reproduced without alteration, but no one has ever yet succeeded in turning them to any domestic purpose.

Rubruk speaks thus of the animal called the yak:—"The Tartars have a powerful kind of oxen which are covered with long hair, and have tails like horses, but smaller legs than most of these species. They are very fierce, but they are made to drag the great rolling houses of the Mongols." The accuracy of this description may be verified any day by a visit to the Thibetan yak in the Jardin des Plantes.*

The monks on this journey saw several Buddhist monasteries, and Rubruk describes the ceremonies and costume of these idolatrous priests, their long yellow robes, their mitres, their shaven crowns, and the chaplet of beads that they are incessantly fingering. It is evident that even at that early period the Lama organisation established among the Oigours had began to be introduced into the military camps of the Mongols; and among the various modes of worship that were mingled together confusedly among these populous hordes, that of Buddhism was in the ascendant. Christianity, being represented only by the ignorant and immoral Nestorians, could hardly make any great impression; and their bishops visited the different districts only at very long intervals, and when they came were, as we have said, so liberal in their bestowal of the dignity of the priesthood as to confer it even on children in their cradles, so that all the men laid claim to the sacerdotal character. The Mongol nobles confided the educa-

* There is a stuffed specimen in the Thibet department of the Crystal Palace.

tion of their children to these men, and they certainly taught their pupils the principal articles of the Christian creed, and thus it was not difficult to make it appear that they were converting the whole nation; but their bad conduct and their insatiable avarice counteracted any good effect that might have resulted from their teaching.

"The Nestorians," says Rubruk, "do possess the Holy Scriptures in the Syriac tongue, but they scarcely understand anything of them. They chant like our ignorant monks who who do not know Latin, and thence it comes that they are mostly corrupt and wicked, and especially great usurers and drunkards."*

On the day when the Franciscan missionaries arrived at the residence of Mangou-Khan, Rubruk remarked, not far from the imperial palace, a building surmounted by a cross. "Then," he says, "I was overwhelmed with joy, thinking that I had got to a Christian place, and I entered the building with confidence and found a magnificent altar. The figures of the Saviour, the Holy Virgin, St. John the Baptist, were embroidered in gold, and the two angels had their garments adorned with jewels. There was also a great silver cross with pearls at the centre and corners, many ornaments, and a lamp with eight branches was burning before the altar. In the sanctuary there was seated an Armenian monk, of a swarthy complexion and attenuated form, and clothed in a tunic that reached only to the mid-leg, and a black fur cloak, fastened with an iron clasp. We entered, but before saluting the monk we knelt down and began chanting the 'Ave Regina cœlorum,' and he then rose and began to pray with us. After saluting one another we seated ourselves near a little brasier in which there was fire.

"This Armenian monk had been a hermit in the Holy Land, not far from Jerusalem, and it was solely by Divine

* Bergeron, p. 117.

inspiration, he said, that he had undertaken this journey to Tartary. God had commanded him to go and convert the Grand Khan; and as soon as he had reached Kara-Koroum he had presented himself to Mangou, exhorting him to become a Christian, and promising that if he embraced the faith the whole world should be subjected to him, and even the French and the sovereign pontiff acknowledge his sway.

"The worthy monk entreated Rubruk to speak to the emperor to the same effect, but the envoy of St. Louis replied, 'My brother, I am certainly very willing that the Khan should become a Christian, since that is the very object of my journey hither; and I will promise him that if he will be baptized, the Pope and the French will rejoice greatly, and will recognise him for a brother and a friend; but not that they should ever become his subjects or pay him tribute, for to say that would be against my conscience and against the mission with which I am charged.'

"The Armenian monk found this answer so categorical that he did not insist further; and Rubruk, for his part, was so little disposed to make concessions, that he says of the Tartars in some part of his narrative, 'These proud and arrogant men believe that the whole world desires their favour; yet, truly, if it were permitted to my profession, and knowing what they are, I should rather advise the making war upon them and fighting them to the last extremity.'"

On the 4th of January, 1254, the missionaries were admitted to an audience of the Grand Khan. "The felt curtain before the door of the palace was drawn up when we entered," says Rubruk, "and as it was still the Christmas season, we began to sing the hymn,—

'A solis ortus cardine
Et usque terræ limitem
Christum canamus principem
Natum Maria virgine.' &c.

"When we had finished, some attendants began to rum

mage our garments all over, to see whether we had any knife concealed in them, and they obliged our interpreter to leave his girdle and his knife at the door, where there was a bench with kumys upon it; and after that, they placed us on a bench opposite some ladies, and made our interpreter stand near us. The place was all hung with cloth of gold, and there was in the midst a chafing-dish filled with a fire made of dried dung, and the roots and thorns of the wormwood, which grows in that country in great abundance. The Grand Khan was seated on a small bed, and clothed in a rich furred robe very lustrous, like the skin of a sea-calf. He was a man of about forty-five years of age, of a middle height, and with a blunt flat nose. His wife, who was seated near him, was young and rather handsome; and she had with her one of her daugh ters, named Cyrina, of a marriageable age, but ugly enough, and there were several little children lying on a bed near them.

The Khan ordered kumys to be brought as well as mead, and rice wine from China, and he seemed to take a pleasure in regaling his guests, and himself did great honour to all these liquors, which, though not very pleasant to the taste, are very heady, especially the kumys. After a good deal had been drunk, a long conversation began; the Tartar sovereign, addressing a crowd of questions to Rubruk, concerning the object of his journey, and the intentions of the Pope and the Christian kings; but with regard to the Tartars, unfortunately the kumys had so muddled the brains and thickened the speech of the interpreter, that hardly anything of what he said could be understood, and the questions and answers got into the wildest confusion. "For my part," says Rubruk, "I understood nothing from what our interpreter said, except that he was very drunk, and the emperor, in my opinion, not much better."*

The people of Mangou questioned the Franciscans with the

* Bergeron, p. 140.

most eager curiosity, and asked for all kinds of details concerning the kingdom of France, and especially whether there were in it plenty of oxen, sheep, and camels, "as if," says the monk, "they had nothing to do but to come and take them. Many times I could hardly repress my anger and indignation."

During their stay at this court, the envoys observed that Mangou-Khan and the members of his family were present equally at the religious ceremonies of the Christians, Mahometans, and Buddhists, but that they knew nothing of Christianity beyond some external rites, such as offering incense; the benediction of the Cup, and the adoration of the Cross; and that independently of their own soothsayers, or *Cames*, they maintained priests of all three religions, in order to make sure of the good things they wished for, and avoid any evils that might threaten them; not thinking that religious practices could have any other object. When Mangou went to the Nestorian church, he used to seat himself with the empress on a gilded divan opposite the altar, and one day he sent for the Franciscans, and desired them to sing. They began the "Veni sancte Spiritus," and while they were singing, Mangou was examining their breviary and Bible with lively interest.

But this was no proof of his feeling drawn towards Christianity; for, faithful to the maxim of Tchinguiz-Khan, he showed no preference for any religion, but treated them all as on an equality. He said one day to Rubruk that all the men at his court, who adored the one eternal God, ought to be free to do so, each in his own way.

Mangou was fond of inviting the professors of all creeds to feasts at his palace together, and on these occasions the Nestorian priests came first, with their sacred ornaments, praying for the emperor, and blessing the cup. After them came the Mussulmans, performing their own ceremonies and reciting their prayers; then the Bonzes, Lamas, and Cames; as Rubruk says, "like bees about flowers, for as the emperor

gives to all, they each wish him all sorts of prosperity, and each regard themselves as his particular friends."

These rather equivocally pious festivals were usually terminated by drinking parties, in which emperor, empress, and priests of all religions got intoxicated together.

The Tartar emperor, though he held no determinate religious faith, was given to a number of superstitious practices, and the principal soothsayer was lodged opposite his tent, not a stone's throw off, having under his care the cars that bore the idols.

These soothsayers practised astrology, and foretold eclipses, and on the occurrence of such a phenomenon, they set to beating the great drum, clashing the cymbals, and uttering loud cries. They also pointed out the lucky and unlucky days for all kinds of affairs, and nothing was undertaken without their advice; it was their business, too, to purify by fire all articles destined for the consumption of the court, as well as the presents offered to the emperor, on which they had a right to levy a certain toll. At the birth of a child they were summoned to cast its horoscope, and they had recourse to sorcery for the cure of diseases.

If they wished to ruin any one, they had nothing to do but to accuse him of having by his malignant arts occasioned any misfortune that might have occurred. When they were interrogated, they evoked their demons by the sound of the tambourine, shaking it furiously; then falling into an ecstasy, they feigned to receive answers from their familiar spirits, and proclaimed them as oracles. It is rather curious, too, that *table-rapping* and *table-turning* were in use in the thirteenth century among these Mongols in the wilds of Tartary. Rubruk himself witnessed an instance of the kind. On the eve of the Ascension, when the mother of Mangou feeling very ill, the first soothsayer was summoned for consultation, he "performed some magic by rapping on a table."

Mangou himself was specially addicted to a kind of con-

juration performed with burnt bones. When about to under take any business that occasioned him anxiety, he used tc have three bones brought to him, and holding them in his hands, put the question whether he would be successful or not, and then gave the bones to be burnt. As soon as they had become blackened by combustion, they were brought back to him, and he examined them. If the strength of the fire had cracked the bones, the emperor would be unlucky, and he accordingly gave the matter up; but if they had remained entire, the fates, it was supposed, would be propitious. This practice is still in use among the Mongols, after the lapse of six hundred years; and the bone generally chosen for this purpose is the blade-bone of a shoulder of mutton. Great numbers of them are often seen suspended like *ex votos*, in the pagodas and tents, and usually covered with sentences in Thibetan characters written by the Lamas.

Towards the festival of Easter, the missionaries followed Mangou-Khan to Kara-Koroum, a town that appeared to them inferior to St. Denis in France. "Its monastery," adds Rubruk, "is ten times bigger than the whole palace of Mangou."

There were in the town two great streets, one called that of the Saracens, where the markets and fairs were held, and where there were a considerable number of foreign merchants, attracted by the presence of the court, and the arrival of a crowd of ambassadors.

The other street was the quarter of Cathay or of the Chinese, and there were to be found all sorts of artisans. This town contained several buildings appropriated to what we may call public offices, as well as twelve temples of various nations, two mosques, and a Nestorian church.

It was surrounded by an earthen rampart, and had four gates, corresponding with the four cardinal points, and near these gates various markets; at the eastern, the one for millet, and al. kinds of grain; at the western, for sheep and goats; at

the northern, for horses; and at the southern, for oxen and waggons.

The Franciscans were much surprised to find here a Parisian goldsmith named Guillaume Boucher, who had been taken prisoner in Hungary by the Tartars, when they captured Belgrade. Along with the goldsmith they had carried off at the same time a Lorraine woman from Metz, named Paqueste, and a Norman bishop, a native of Belleville, near Rouen. The goldsmith had executed an ingenious work in the imperial palace; a silver tree, intended to be produced at the solemn festivals given by the emperor at Easter, and in the summer. At the foot of this tree reposed four lions, from whose jaws wine, mead, and other liquors were spouted into four basins of silver. At the summit of the tree, besides branches, leaves and fruit, all of silver, there was a silver angel with his wings extended, and which, by some interior mechanism sounded a trumpet when the time came for the attendants to fill the reservoirs that supplied the fountains. This marvellous tree was placed opposite the imperial throne, in a magnificent hall where the Kha-kan took his meals, and received the presents of the ambassadors.

The industrious Parisian had also fabricated a large silver cross, with a crucifix; but that had brought him into disgrace with the Nestorian priests, since they do not admit of crucifixes in their churches. Rubruk also mentions, among the works of Boucher, a sculptured image of the Holy Virgin, with the principal facts of the Gospel history carved round it; and he made a pyx and a ciborium for the Franciscans. On Holy Thursday and Easter Day, Rubruk celebrated the sacred mysteries in the Nestorian baptistry, and administered the communion to the faithful.

An opportunity soon presented itself for the envoys of St. Louis to make their solemn profession of faith in the presence of the court. Mangou-Khan seeing around him the representatives of various religions, all claiming the truth as their

possession, determined on bringing them face to face, and making them explain their various pretensions in the presence of the people. He ordered that a public discussion should take place between the Christians, Mahometans and Buddhists, and even required the ministers of these various creeds to send him in writing a statement of their articles of faith. Rubruk, who was well-informed, eloquent, and of a subtle turn of mind, wished to have a previous understanding with the Nestorians, as to the course they meant to pursue in the discussion. The Nestorians proposed to attack the Mahometans first, and then the idolaters; but the Franciscans opposed this course, alleging that the Mussulmans agreed with Christians as to the unity of God; and this point being granted by them, it was desirable to prove the existence of God to the Bonzes, who saw the Divine essence in virtue, perfection, and the soul of each individual being, thus maintaining a system of extensive pantheism.

Rubruk wishing to take measures that should ensure him the victory, proposed to the Nestorians to have a kind of rehearsal, in which he would take the part of Bonze, and argue against them. But as his adversaries were not very skilful, they were continually worsted in this preparatory exercise; and as they never brought forward any other proofs than those from Holy Scripture, Rubruk had to point out to them that these could be of no avail with men who did not accept the Scriptures. It was therefore decided that Rubruk should speak first, and maintain the thesis.

These things being settled, the meeting took place on the eve of Pentecost; three of the emperor's secretaries, a Mussulman, a Buddhist, and a Christian, being appointed as umpires in the contest. At the opening of the debate, a proclamation by the Kha-khan was read, in which it was forbidden, under pain of death, that either of the orators should say anything abusive of their adversaries, or raise any tumult that might stop the discussion.

After the reading of this proclamation, there was a profound silence in the assembly, to which the most learned men of each party had been invited; and then the Christians placed Rubruk in the midst of them, and charged him to maintain their cause against the pagans. Then a Bonze, who came from China, rose, and began to speak. "My friend," said he, addressing Rubruk, "if you find yourself driven to extremity, you would do well to seek for some one more skilful than yourself."

Rubruk made no answer to this impertinent speech, and the Chinese continued, "With what wilt thou commence the discussion? Shall it be on the creation of the world, or on the fate of the soul after death?"

"Friend," replied the Franciscan, "the questions concerning those things must not form the beginning of our controversy. All things come from God,—He is the source and origin of whatever exists; we must, therefore, speak of God first; for we have not the same ideas concerning the Divinity, and Mangou wishes to know which of us has the best faith."

The umpires decided that this was reasonable, and Rubruk then proceeded to prove the existence of God from philosophical arguments; but when he had finished his demonstration, the Chinese cried, "One must be mad to think there is but one God! The sages admit several. Are there not in the world princes of various degrees of power, and is not Mangou-Khan above them all? It is the same with the Gods. Who is, then, this only God of whom you speak?"

Then Rubruk replied by enumerating the attributes of the Divinity and asserting his omnipotence. The Bonze exclaimed and protested, saying that he could not admit the existence of one omnipotent God.

"If not," said Rubruk, "there is no one among your Gods who can with certainty secure you from evil and danger. To what purpose, then, is it to pray to and worship them?" Finally the Franciscan monk was declared by the umpires

and even by the Chinese Bonze himself, to have gained the victory.

"The Nestorians then entered the lists against the Mussulmans, but the latter declared that there was no ground for dispute; that they regarded the Christian law as a true one, and believed all that the Gospel contained; that they acknowledged one God alone, and prayed to him every day.

"This conference being then ended," says Rubruk, "the Nestorians and Saracens chanted together with a loud voice, but the pagans said nothing at all; and after that the whole assembly drank together pretty freely."

The day after the public controversy, Mangou sent for Rubruk, and began to make a kind of confession of faith. "We Mongols," said he, "believe that there is one God, by whom we live and die, and towards whom our hearts are wholly turned."

"May God give you his grace that it may be so," said Rubruk, "for otherwise it is impossible."

The emperor went on: "As God has given the hand several fingers, so has He prepared for men various ways, by which they may go to heaven. He has given the Gospel to the Christians, but they do not obey it; He has given soothsayers to the Mongols, and the Mongols do what their soothsayers command, and, therefore, they live in peace."

Mangou-Khan then terminated the interview by declaring, that the missionaries had now been long enough in his empire, and that it was time they should think of going home again; and Rubruk was not allowed, after that, any more opportunities for instructing the prince, or explaining to him the truths of the Christian faith. "I took my leave," he says, simply, "thinking that if God had been pleased to let me perform such miracles as Moses did, perhaps I should have converted him."

After a stay of five months at the imperial court, the envoys of St. Louis prepared to depart. Mangou wished to

send some ambassadors with them, but Rubruk stated that they should have to pass through countries where there was no safety for travellers, and that he could not be responsible for their persons; and Mangou, therefore, contented himself with charging him with letters, in reply to those he had brought from the King of France.

Rubruk asked whether, after having delivered these letters, he might return to watch over the spiritual welfare of the Christians in this part of Tartary. To this request Mangou made no reply at all, but, after advising the Franciscan to provide himself well with necessaries for the long journey he was about to undertake, offered him the usual refreshment, gave him three robes, and dismissed him.

In the letter sent to St. Louis, the Mongol emperor takes the title of Son of Heaven, and Sovereign Lord; he refuses to acknowledge David, the envoy of Iltchikadai, and the Regent Queen Ogoul; and, finally, he commands King Louis, if he wishes to merit his favour and obtain his friendship, to obey exactly the laws of the successors of Tchinguiz-Khan. The literal translation of the missive is as follows:—

"This is the command of the Eternal God! There is but one God in Heaven, and one Sovereign Lord upon the Earth, —Tchinguiz-Khan, the Son of Heaven!

"These are the words that we make you hear; we, who are in this country, whether Mongols, Naimans, Merkites, or Mussulmans. Wherever ears can hear, or horses can gallop, all those to whom my orders have reached, and who shall not obey them, or who shall arm themselves to resist them, they shall have eyes and not see; they shall have ears and hear not; they shall have hands, and not be able to make use of them; they shall have feet, and shall not be able to walk. Such are the commands of the eternal God, and of the God of the Earth, the Sovereign of the Mongols. This command is addressed by Mangou-Khan to Louis, King of France, to all the lords and priests, and to all the kingdom of France, in

order that they may hear my words, and the commands of the Eternal God to Tchinguiz-Khan, which have not yet reached you.

"A man named David has been to you as ambassador from the Mongols, but he was a liar, and an impostor; you sent your ambassadors with him to Couyouk-Khan, and they arrived at his court after his death. His widow, Ogoul, sent you by them a piece of silk and some letters. As to the affairs of peace and war, how could that wicked woman, more vile and abject than a feminine dog, know anything about such matters?

"These two monks came from you to Sartak, who sent them to Batou, and Batou sent them hither, because Mangou-Khan is the supreme chief of the Mongols. We should have sent back our ambassadors with your priests, but they have given us to understand that between your country and ours there are many hostile nations, and dangerous roads, which made them fear that our ambassadors might not reach you in safety; but they have offered to bear the letters containing our commands to King Louis. Thus, then, we address to you, by your priests, the commands of the eternal God. When you shall have heard them, you will send us your ambassadors, to let us know whether you will have peace or war with us.

"If you despise the commandments of God, in the thought that your country is very distant, and that you are protected by high mountains and vast and deep seas, He who can make easy what is difficult, and bring near what is far off, knows well what we shall do."*

Rubruk took leave of Mangou on the 8th of July, 1254, and took with him as a present to St. Louis from the Parisian goldsmith, a girdle ornamented with a precious stone, which the Tartars made use of as a spell against thunder.

* "Voyage de Rubruk," ch. 48.

Bartholomew of Cremona did not, on account of his bad health, wish to pass again through the desert to revisit the encampment of Batou, and Rubruk, therefore, set off without him, accompanied only by a guide and a servant. During his stay at Kara-Koroum, he had baptized a considerable number of children.

Towards the end of the month of August, the travellers met Prince Sartak, who was going to the emperor; and, if we may believe what was declared to Pope Innocent the Fourth by a priest named John, by whom he was accompanied, the prince had just been baptized. He appeared pleased to see the Franciscan again, and gave him two silk robes; one for himself, and the other for the King of France; but Rubruk sent them both to St. Louis.

On the 16th of September, the missionary reached the camp of Batou, after a march of seventy days, during which he saw but one village, and there he could not procure so much as a little flour. Very often he had no kind of nourishment except kumys. Rubruk, for several weeks, accompanied the nomadic court of Batou, but at length quitted the Tartars, and took his way towards Caucasus; and after having traversed Armenia and Syria, arrived on the 15th of August, 1255, at his convent of St. John d'Acre, whence he addressed the narrative of his journey to St. Louis, who had returned to France.

The curious details given by this indefatigable monk must have excited the liveliest interest and emotion among the Christians of the West; and it was certainly a most remarkable thing to hear that in the midst of the steppes of Tartary, and under the tent of a grandson of Tchinguiz-Khan, a religious conference had taken place concerning the Unity of God, and the Holy Trinity, between Pagans, Christians, and Mahometans; between a monk of St. Francis d'Assisium from the far West, and a Chinese philosopher from the remotest East; and to hear, too, of this poor Franciscan listening to confes-

sions, and administering the Communion to Christians at Kara-Koroum, the Tartar capital. No less remarkable and beautiful is it, perhaps, to hear with what simplicity this monk tells the story of his adventures to the first monarch of Europe, St. Louis of France.

In concluding his narrative Rubruk gives his opinion that it would be desirable to send to the Tartars, not mere monks, but a bishop or some other prelate of distinction with the rank of an ambassador, as they would probably, in that case, pay more attention to what was said; and he adds, that these people are not really as formidable as has been imagined, and that their conquests have been effected as much by trickery as by force of arms. "I positively declare," he says to St. Louis, "that if our peasants would live as frugally and dress like these Tartars, they might make the same conquests."*

* Bergeron, p. 895.

CHAPTER VII.

Institution of the Society of Brother Travellers for Jesus Christ. — Journey of King Hayton in Tartary. — The Negotiations. — Houlagou leads his Army towards Jerusalem. — Destruction of the Order of the Assassins. — End of the Caliphate of Bagdad. — The Tartars draw near to the Christians. — Alexander III. deters Bela, King of Hungary, from forming an Alliance with the Mongols. — The forty-nine Martyrs of Sandomir. — Houlagou and Nassir. — Houlagou and Alexander IV. — Strife between the Mongols and the Christians of Sidon. — Defeat of the Tartars in Egypt. — Kublai, the Grand Khan of the Tartars. — Change of Policy. — Death of Houlagou. — Marriage of his Son Abaga with the Daughter of Michael Palæologus. — Abaga and Clement IV. — Tartar Ambassadors at Lyons. — They go to England. — Mission of the two Vassilli. — Nicholas III. sends Missionaries and Letters to China and Tartary.

Whilst the ambassadors of Louis IX. were proceeding to the ends of the world to preach the Gospel to the hordes of Tartary, the Papacy was organising the work of the propagation of the faith on a vast scale in Europe.

In 1252, Innocent IV. conceived the project of forming a body of missionaries, the members of which, taken from the spiritual families of St. Francis and St. Dominic, should be as numerous as they were zealous, and always ready to set out on the most distant and perilous journeys, for the aggrandisement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

This body received a name that happily indicated its destination*; namely, that of the "Society of Brother Travellers for Jesus Christ."

These missionaries were intrepid and hardy pioneers, whose lot it was to open the way for travellers who should afterwards follow in their track, from motives of policy, for the

* Wadding, "Annales Minorum, Ann. 1252."

sake of commerce or of science, or perhaps nothing more than frivolous curiosity. They undertook these laborious peregrinations for Christ's sake, for the saving of souls, the diffusion of truth, for the enfranchisement of the nations, and for true civilisation. This society, an eminently Catholic one, had in its bosom bishops and archbishops, on whom the Holy See had conferred great power. The monks belonging to it were to be scattered over the countries of Mussulmans and idolaters, to preach the Catholic faith; and St. Raymond of Pennafort, general of the Dominican Order, wishing to render the preaching of the missionaries more efficacious, employed a method which contributed much to the progress of the Gospel. He begged St. Thomas d'Aquinas, whose reputation was already very high in the Church, to compose a work which should contain a clear and methodical exposition of the truth of the Christian religion, with their proofs, and answers to the objections of infidels. The holy doctor accordingly took up his pen, and composed his work in four volumes, "On the Catholic Faith," or "Summary against the Gentiles;" and Raymond de Pennafort received, as a gift from heaven, a work that was to afford such signal help to the zeal of the missionaries.

Alexander IV., the successor of Innocent IV., showed no less ardour for the conversion of the nations, and the propagation of the faith through the world. This pope had the extension of the religion of Jesus Christ so much at heart, that he was continually stimulating the zeal of the friars minor, and the preachers, by the concession of fresh privileges. The monks to whom this career had been opened, threw themselves into it with a generous fervour; and full of joy that they should have to endure fatigues and tribulations for the glory of God; and it appears, by the diploma of 1248, that the Franciscans were placed fully on a level with the Dominicans. The diploma is addressed by the Pope "to our dear brothers of the Minorite orders, in the lands of the Saracens,

Pagans, Greeks, Bulgarians, Coumanians, Ethiopians, Syrians, Iberians, Alans, Gazares, Goths, Ziques, Rothenes, Georgians, Nubians, Nestorians, Jacobites, Armenians, Indians, Mostelites, Tartars, Hungarians of Great Hungary, Turks, and other infidel nations of the East!"* A long enumeration, which serves to show that the maternal solicitude of the Church extended to all known nations, and endeavoured to shed Gospel light upon the whole world.

Of all the nations thus indicated the Tartars were the most powerful, for the emperor Mangou ruled from the most Eastern parts of Asia to Constantinople; and Poland, the banks of the Danube, Bulgaria, Turkey, the principality of Antioch, in a word, the whole East, even to India, was become tributary to the Mongols.

Whilst Rubruk was returning from Kara-Koroum, a certain king of Armenia, named Hayton, feeling little confidence in the security of his dominions, while the Mongol power was swallowing up all nations in its overwhelming march, resolved, by the advice of his ministers, to take a journey to Tartary, and try to secure his kingdom by getting into the good graces of Mangou-Khan. Before setting out, he thought it advisable, however, to send thither his brother Sinibald, the Constable of his kingdom, in order to feel his way.

Sinibald betook himself to the court of Batou, with a numerous suite and magnificent presents; and made the most favorable preparation for the good reception of the king, to whom he returned in four years, and described all that he had seen, and even wrote to the King of Cyprus the curious letter already mentioned.

King Hayton was therefore confirmed in his resolution, and undertook the journey to Tartary accordingly, proceeding by the way of Derbend that he might visit Batou and Sartak,

* Fontana. "Monumenta Dominica, Ann. 1258." Wadding, "Annales Minorum ad Anno."

and then going on to the imperial court, where he met with a most honorable reception. After a residence of fifty days he quitted it, bearing with him letters patent by which he was invested with his own kingdom, and an ordonnance that not only diminished the tribute imposed on Little Armenia, but guaranteed to his clergy the freedom from all impositions. The narrative of the King of Armenia's journey was written by one of his nephews, named like himself Hayton, and we here give a few extracts from it in their original simplicity:—*

"In the year of the Incarnation of our Lord, one thousand two hundred, Aytone (Hayton), King of Armenia, a prince of very noble memory, seeing how the Tartars had conquered the world as far as the kingdom of Turkey, and that they had met with no monarch powerful enough to put them down, assembled the wise men of his kingdom and pointed this out to them, and requested their counsel. They all agreed with their noble and wise king that he himself should go in person to the great Khan of the Tartars, to gain his good will and make with him a perpetual alliance; but before he went himself, the king was to send his brother, the constable of his kingdom, to obtain a safe conduct for him, so that he might go and come in safety. And my Lord his brother went with a fine company and took with him great presents to the Khan, and did very nobly the business for which he was sent; but it was four years before he came back to the land of Armenia.

"When he returned he related to his brother the king, in order, all that he had seen and done. Then, without any de-

* "In the year 1205, Pope Clement V., desiring to undertake the conquest of the Holy Land, with the help of the Tartars, the enemies of the Turks of Syria and Egypt, and knowing that there was at Cyprus a monk named Hayton, of the order of Premonstrants, who had been in all the wars of the Tartars against the Turks, sent for him to France, where the Pope then was; it was this monk who wrote the history from which we quote. It was written in French, then much used in the East, afterwards translated by the Pope's order into Latin by a Nicolas Salconi, and then put back into French again by a monk of St. Omer's, named Friar John of Long d'Ypre, in the year 1351. It was printed in 1529 in handsome Gothic characters, in the collection entitled "Hystoire Mérveilleuse du Grant Caan."

lay, the king set forth, but secretly and with few people, because he feared to be recognised in the kingdom of Turkey, which was his neighbour and enemy. But it pleased our Lord God, that the Soldan of Turkey had been at that time vanquished and discomfited by a duke of the Tartars, whom the King of Armenia met, and made himself known to.

"When this duke heard that the King of Armenia wished to go peaceably to the Khan, he received him very honourably, and had him safely conveyed to beyond the Iron Gate.* And he met with other captains who received him with joy, and conducted him through the countries until he came to the city of Amalich, where Mangou then held his court. Mangou-Khan and all the princes of Tartary were very joyous at the coming of the King of Armenia, and especially because since the death of Tchinguiz-Khan no great princes had come in peace to see them, and so this one received great benevolence and honour, and some of the greatest and most noble of the Tartars were appointed to keep him company and do him honour; and the Khan himself showed him so much favour and grace, and bestowed on him such great gifts, that they speak in Armenia of those gifts and graces. The king remained and rested for a time, and then begged for the settlement of the business for which he had come; and the Khan answered that he would willingly do all he could for him and his people, and for that he had come hither of his own accord and will, he might ask for whatever should please him."

King Hayton hastened to profit by this favourable disposition of the Khan, and addressed to him a long series of requests. In the first place, that the Khan and all his family would embrace Christianity and get himself baptized. Secondly, that he would send an army into the Holy Land to conquer it and give it to the Christians. Thirdly, that he would restore to the King of Armenia certain lands that had been taken from

* A fortification traditionally ascribed to Alexander the Great.

him by the Tartars. Fourthly, that the Khan would enter with him into an alliance offensive and defensive. Fifthly, that he would dispense the monks and other Christians living in the Tartar dominions from the payment of all taxes; and strange as some of these requests may seem, the historian declares that they were favourably received by the Tartar emperor.

"When Mangou had heard all these petitions of the king, he called together his nobles and councillors and deliberated upon the requests above named, and then gave audience to the king and the others who were with him, and spoke thus:—'Forasmuch as this King of Armenia has come from a distant country to our Imperial Majesty, not constrained nor called, nor summoned, but of his own proper good will, it becomes and is suitable to our Imperial Majesty, that we benignly grant his petitions, and especially as they are laudable and honest, and we accept them willingly, and by the aid of God will accomplish what we promise.'"

The Armenian chronicler adds that the Tartar emperor was faithful to his word, and even made haste to get himself baptized.

"After that Mangou-Khan had granted and confirmed these privileges, he demanded the holy sacrament of baptism. Then was baptized Mangou-Khan with great joy, and with him all the people of his palace, and many other noble Tartars, both men and women, by the hand of the bishop, who was the chancellor of the King of Armenia, and who was made welcome with the king his lord."*

This narrative of Hayton's certainly contains circumstances that appear very improbable. It is possible, however, that Mangou may have allowed himself to be baptized, without meaning to profess himself a Christian, for he was in the habit of complying indifferently with the practices of various modes

* "L'Hystoire Merveilleuse du Grant Caan," feull. 14.

of worship established at his court, but he professed no positive religion, and very likely regarded baptism as a mere ceremony of purification.

The young but vast empire of the Tartars, being perpetually surrounded by enemies, was under the fatal necessity of continually undertaking new conquests; and Mangou-Khan, feeling, in 1256, great doubts of the intentions of some of his neighbours, placed his two brothers, Kublai and Houlagou, at the head of two considerable armies; the first was to march to China and conquer it, the second to invade Persia and Mesopotamia. It was just at this time that King Hayton visited Kara-Koroum, and Houlagou, before he began his march, received instructions very favourable to the kingdom of Armenia. One of the requests of King Hayton to the Tartar emperor was, as we have seen, that he should conquer the Holy Land and deliver Jerusalem from the Saracens; and Mangou now charged Houlagou to satisfy the King of Armenia in this particular. Such was the origin of the famous expedition which resulted in placing a grandson of Tchinguiz-Khan on the throne of Persia, and establishing there a government almost independent of that of Kara-Koroum.

Houlagou entered Persia with 70,000 horsemen, and the first year of his occupation was signalised by the destruction of the Assassins, and of some Mussulman states of Irak, and the south of Persia. These Assassins or Ismaelites,* who were exterminated by the Tartar chief, had a certain head or king named *Rokud-din*, called by the writers of that time the "Old Man of the Mountain." This monarch, it was said, occupied a country of wonderful fertility, and abounding in all sorts of good things. He inhabited a palace of extraordinary magnificence, surrounded by delicious gardens, where there was nothing wanting for voluptuous enjoyment; and it was added, that by the attraction of such delights, this old

* Commonly designated in the country Hascheschin, whence was derived *Assissin*, and thence Assassin.

man of the mountain had enticed to him men of all countries, of whom he made assassins, and then sent them forth to kill the princes and kings that he pointed out to them. He exercised, it was said, such a fascination over them, that they vowed a blind obedience to his will, and executed all his commands, even at the peril of their lives. Joinville, Nangis, and many other historians, say that in the time of the Crusades these fanatics were frequently met with in the Holy Land. They attempted to assassinate St. Louis; and Edward the First of England, was severely wounded by one of them.

The Arabs named these miscreants Gazis or Saleides. When their sovereign was on a march, a man went before him bearing a hatchet, surrounded by knives and swords, and crying from time to time, "Back! Back! Fly from before the face of him who holds in his hands the death of kings!"

The progress of Houlagou was one incessant course of victory and destruction; but the Georgians and Armenians managed to gain his good will, and he showered favours on the Christians, it was thought from the influence of his wife *Dhogouz-Katoun*, who was of that faith. He even went so far as to have a chapel fitted up in his camp, in the plain of Moughan, where the Armenians, Georgians, and Syrians freely celebrated divine service.

Having completed the conquest of Persia, Houlagou set out on a march toward Bagdad, whither he was proceeding, with the applause of all the Christians of the East, to destroy the Caliphate, then represented by Mostassim. This prince, from the day of his installation on the throne of the Caliphs, had done nothing but exhibit his absurd vanity and taste for puerile pomp, which he took for grandeur. When he went to the Mosque, he would only walk on cloth of gold; and he would not alight from his horse at the gate of the Temple. He kept his face veiled, in order, he said, that his features might not be defiled by the looks of a vile populace; and he required

all who came to his palace to kiss its threshold, and also a piece of black velvet suspended at his door, for which he demanded the same honours as for the famous black stone in the temple of Mecca.

He was a prince destitute of energy, judgment, and aptitude for business, who, with the exception of a little superficial employment in his library, passed his whole time in hearing music, visiting his aviaries, and seeing conjuring tricks; and he was entirely governed by his women and his courtiers.

Such was the last Caliph of the Mussulmans, and such his occupations, when, on the 22d of January, 1258, Houlagou appeared with his army before Bagdad. After various engagements, in all of which he was victorious, the Tartar summoned Caliph Mostassim to surrender. "Avoid war," said the conqueror, "and do not strike your fist upon the pricker, or take the sun for a lamp, or it will be worse for you. If you rase the walls, and fill up the ditches of Bagdad, and present yourself to us in person, we may not chastise you; but if in our wrath, we attack Bagdad, you will not escape, not though you should hide yourself in the bowels of the earth. If, then, you desire your own safety, and that of your house, lend an ear to my counsels; if you do not, we shall see what is the will of God."

The Caliph replied to this summons: "Young man, who, seduced by ten days' good fortune, imagine yourself master of the world, and dream that your commands are irresistible, like those of fate—what audacity is this, to ask of me what you will never obtain? Do you not know, that from the East unto the West, all who adore God and profess the true faith are my servants? Follow, then, the way of peace and prudence, and return to Khorassan."*

While the Tartar envoys were bringing back this haughty answer to their master, they were assailed by the populace

* D'Ohsson's "Hist. of Mongols," vol. iii. p. 217.

of Bagdad, who overwhelmed them with abuse, spat on their faces, tore their clothes, and would have massacred them, but that some guards, sent in haste by the vizier, snatched them from the hands of the Mussulmans.

On hearing of this outrage, Houlagou exclaimed, "The behaviour of the Caliph is more crooked than this bow; but so God help me, I will make it as straight as this arrow."

On the first of February, Houlagou took the city of Bagdad by storm, and thus put an end to the power of the Caliphs. He had made Mostassim believe that he was willing to give his daughter in marriage to the Caliph's son, Aboubeker, and on the 10th of February Mostassim was seen issuing from his palace, with his wife, his children, his jewels, and all the most considerable persons of his court; he was installed in a magnificent tent near one of the gates of the city; and the magistrates, officers, and lawyers of the place assembled, as if to witness the nuptial ceremony, and draw up the contract, But when the principal people were thus all got together, the Tartars set on them, and put them all to death. Bagdad, the city of science, learning, and pleasure, was given up to pillage and slaughter, and more than 800,000 persons were mercilessly destroyed. Sanut* declares that Houlagou killed the Caliph by pouring molten gold down his throat, in mockery of his avarice. The chronicle of St. Louis says that he was shut in an iron cage, and that the Mongol general, adding insult to cruelty, told him that a person of his quality ought not to be fed like an ordinary mortal, and ordered that he should have no food but the gold and jewels that he had been so fond of and had kept to himself, instead of distributing them amongst his troops. It has been said, too, that Houlagou, at the solicitation of his wife, had the mosques rased to the ground, and forbade the Saracens to pay homage to Mahomet; and it is certain that in the sack of the city he spared the Christians.

* Merin Sanut, "Secreta fidelium crucis, &c.," lib. iii. ch. 7.

The Nestorians, who were in considerable number in the town, suffered no damage, but remained in safety in the church where their patriarch Machicha had assembled them. After the victory Houlagou received Machicha in a friendly manner, and assigned him as a residence one of the Caliph's palaces on the Tigris, and the patriarch built there a spacious and beautiful church.

The Tartars seemed at this time in some measure to make common cause with the Christians in these countries, the bond between them being of course their common hatred of the Mussulmans. But the political interest which tended thus to unite nations so dissimilar in manners and religion did not exist in the North of Europe, and in Russia, Poland and Hungary, where they were as hostile as ever; and the Christian princes, who had found themselves compelled to submit and to serve in the Mongol armies, were regarded with the same horror as the Mongols themselves.

Whilst the Christians did not object in the South to profit by the alliances which some of the princes, the King of Armenia, for instance, had entered into with the Tartar generals, they regarded with detestation, as deserters from the Christian name, those who in the North had done the same thing—perhaps only with the view of preserving their people from the misfortune of an unequal and hopeless struggle. This was because in the North the troops demanded by the Mongols as auxiliaries, having no Mussulmans to fight, would infallibly have had to turn their arms against their own countrymen and fellow Christians. Thus, in 1254, when Livonia and Poland appeared to be threatened, and the Pope wished to guard from invasion the countries where the establishment of Christianity had been so difficult, he wrote to the bishops, enjoining them to preach a crusade against the Tartars and their *accomplices*, by which he meant the Russians, whose troops formed part of the army of Batou.

The aversion felt by Western Europeans to any alliance

with the Tartars is shown still more strongly in a letter of Alexander IV. to Bela, King of Hungary, on the occasion of a proposal made to the latter by Bereka, the successor of Batou. He had sent ambassadors to offer to Bela an alliance to be cemented by the marriage of their children. Under this arrangement the son of the King of Hungary was to march with a certain number of Hungarian troops, as an auxiliary of the Tartars, and to receive the fifth part of all the booty that was made in the war. Hungary was also to be exempt from all tribute, and the Tartars were to respect her frontier. These liberal offers however were accompanied, in case of refusal, with menaces of a cruel war, and of the total destruction of the country.

Bela, who, on the first irruption of the Mongols, had only been able to offer them a feeble resistance, and who subsequently had only owed to their spontaneous retreat the possibility of resuming his throne, had recourse in this new perplexity to his customary refuge. He wrote to Rome for help and counsel, and did not forget to remind the Pope that in similar circumstances, Gregory IX. had abandoned him to the fury of the Mongols.

"The complaints* contained in the beginning of your letter," replies Alexander, "have rent our heart. It is stated therein that when your kingdom was cruelly devastated by the Tartars, you asked for help from our predecessor Gregory, and that that pontiff, as if he had forgotten your signal devotion and that of your ancestors, was not willing to show even in words, far less in actions, that he grieved for the slaughter of your subjects. You add, that after his death, and during the vacancy of the apostolic see, the cardinals gave you the consoling promise that the future Pope would exert himself to drive the barbarians from your frontier, but that this hope had not been realised.

* Odor Raynald, "Annal. Eccl." vol. xiv. No. 33. p. 50.

"In seeking the assistance and advice of the Church against the fresh attacks of the Tartars, you show that she scorned and forsook you in your former peril—but if you will consider the unfortunate situation of the Church herself at that period, we believe that you will absolve her from blame, and agree that the omission of which you complain can only be attributed to the misfortunes of the time, and to the iniquity of those who were then troubling the Church. The Emperor Frederick exercised the most violent tyranny against the Apostolic See; he attacked it with his whole power, in order that, when he had crushed it, he himself might receive the supreme honour. To defend her own liberty and that of her sons, the Church had to make such great expenditure, and became herself so oppressed by debts, that it was impossible for her to afford succour to others,—and even to this day her resources have not enabled her to acquit herself of all her liabilities.

"If, after the accession of the new pontiff, the promises given by the cardinals were not fulfilled, it was because that help was no longer necessary, since the Tartars had then evacuated your territories. You add that not having it in your power to resist such powerful enemies, you would be compelled, should you not receive any assistance from the Holy See (though groaning over the necessity), to enter into a treaty of alliance with them, and that they had even pressed you to do so, offering a daughter of a Tartar prince in marriage to your son—or a son of theirs to your daughter, according to your choice." Then passing in review the other conditions offered to Bela by the Mongols, Alexander goes on to declare that a king of Hungary, or any Christian king, should be ashamed to hold on conditions so humiliating, not only all the kingdoms of the world, but even his life, or that of his family.

"Turn with horror, my son," cries the pontiff, "from the thought of clouding the splendour of your titles with shame.

and staining with perpetual ignominy the beauty of your reign. To what infamy would not a prince expose himself who should break with the whole body of the faithful to connect himself with pagan nations, and march with them against Christian sovereigns and their subjects? What trust also could he place in the duration of an alliance which would, instead of securing his safety, at the utmost only retard his ruin? Is it not well known that the Tartars have seduced many nations by insidious treaties, and that as they hold not the true faith, no account is to be made of their oaths. The union of a Hungarian princess with the son of Bereka, or the daughter of the latter with a Hungarian prince, would not be a marriage, but an infamous adultery, since Christian persons cannot unite themselves in the Lord with pagans."

Such were the expostulations by which the Pope endeavoured to deter Bela from the proposed alliance. In conclusion he excuses himself for not being able to send, according to the king's request, a body of a thousand armed men, but promises a liberal concession of indulgences for a crusade against the Tartars. Alexander IV. could not, in fact, offer Bela anything more than the expression of his sincere sympathy, which was not very efficacious against an invasion of Mongol hordes. Fortunately for Hungary Bela found better help in an alliance with Bohemia, who also had at this time to look about for the means of defence, and more fortunately still, Bereka, after having ravaged Poland, thought proper to turn his arms in the direction of Persia. The cruelties perpetrated by the Tartars in Poland should not be entirely passed over, since they served to give martyrs to the Church, and to the faithful, beautiful examples of Christian fortitude.

At the time of the second irruption of the Tartars in 1260, Sadoc, whom St. Dominic had sent into Hungary to preach Jesus Christ, was governing a pious colony of brethren at Sandomir, and Fontana relates* that the glorious trial reserved for

* Monumenta Dominicana, ann. 1260.

these Dominicans was thus revealed to them. On the evening before the day of their martyrdom, the novice, who was reading to the monks in the refectory from the martyrology, suddenly saw in the book, written in letters of gold, these words, "At Sandomir the deaths of forty-nine martyrs," At first he felt uncertain whether he ought to read the words or not, but he soon pronounced them in a loud voice. Sadoc and the other fathers, greatly astonished, wished to see the book, but the letters of gold vanished as soon as they took it into their hands.

The prior then turning towards the monks said to them, "These divinely traced letters are a warning from heaven, my beloved brethren, and it is not in vain that they have been revealed to the eyes of this young and innocent novice. The author of life and death has thus given us notice to prepare ourselves for that life which shall know no end. Let no one of us therefore neglect to do so by the reception of the sweet and holy viaticum. The Tartars will take from us indeed our lives—but only the mortal life, so transitory and full of pain; whilst a life eternal and full of felicity will be granted to us in exchange by Jesus Christ the King of martyrs." On the very next day the Tartars arrived before Sandomir, and took the town by assault. Sadoc assembled all the brethren in the church, and they began to sing the anthem "Salve Regina," but while they were employed thus in celebrating the praise of God for having judged them worthy of the immortal palm —the barbarians broke in and massacred them all.

About the same time the glorious death of an illustrious and zealous missionary, also afforded consolation to the Church in the midst of her sufferings. This was a Hungarian prince, who having reached an advanced age, and being weary of human dignities, had exchanged the insignia of sovereignty for the modest habit of St. Dominic, and had gone to evangelise the barbarous inhabitants of remote countries. The prior of the convent which sheltered this valiant apostle during this

Tartar invasion, thought to retire, in order to save his own life and the lives of his brethren. This good monk, however entreated to be left behind as guardian of the convent and the church, adding, to overcome the unwillingness of the prior, that he was already old, and that if the Tartars should kill him, the death of one useless old man would be of little consequence to the Order. His perseverance at length triumphed, and when his brethren had departed, he employed himself in keeping up the courage of the faithful in the town, administering the sacrament to them, and enjoining them to receive fearlessly for the love of God, the death inflicted by the barbarians.

When the brethren returned some days afterwards to the convent, they found the body of the holy old man prostrate before the high altar, pierced with many wounds, and bathed in blood, with the arms stretched out in the form of a cross, and the brains scattered all about.*

Whilst the Mongols were covering Poland with blood and ruins, Houlagou, in the East, was completing the conquest of Syria. After the capture of Bagdad he had entered Mesopotamia, seized on Merdin and Harran, passed the Euphrates, and made himself master of Aleppo and Damascus.

The Tartar general had sent orders to Nassir, the Sultan of Aleppo, to submit at once, and come in person to meet him; but Nassir only sent his son Aziz—though with rich presents, and accompanied by many dignitaries of the court. When they were admitted to an audience, Houlagou demanded why their master had not come himself? They alleged that it was because he feared that if he should absent himself from his country, the Franks, his neighbours and enemies, would come and invade it.

Houlagou seemed to accept the excuse, and kept young Aziz with him all the winter; but when he dismissed him, he gave him the following letter, to deliver to his father.

* Fontana Monument. dom., ann. 1261.

"In the name of God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth!* Know, oh Prince Nassir, that we arrived before Bagdad in 655 (A. D. 1257), and that we took its sovereign prisoner. He had behaved ill to us, and being questioned, he acknowledged this, and owned that he deserved death. Covetous of his riches, he has ended by losing all. His grasping despotism has caused him to exchange the most precious goods for annihilation. According to the adage, 'That which has reached the summit begins to decline,' but we, on the contrary, are increasing.

"Oh! Prince Nassir, and all you generals and warriors of Syria, know that we are the soldiers of God upon the earth, and that he has created us in his wrath, and given us power over those who have awakened his anger. May the example of so many countries enlighten you! May the misfortunes of others serve you for a lesson!

"Surrender, *before the vail shall open*;† for we are not sensible to tears, nor moved by complaints. As to pity, God has taken it out of our hearts, and woe to those who do not belong to us!

"You know how many countries we have conquered, how many nations we have destroyed. Let flight be yours, and let pursuit be ours! But what road will save you, what land will protect you? Nothing can defend you from our arms. Our steeds are lightnings, our swords thunderbolts, our breasts as hard as rocks, our warriors as numerous as the grains of sand. He who attempts to resist us will repent of it; he who asks our grace will find safety. Our empire is respected, and our vassals are secure. If you receive our law, everything shall be in common between us. If you resist, if you persist in your obstinacy, lay the blame of what follows only on yourself. He who warns is justified!

* The letter is said to have been written in Arabic by the celebrated astronomer Nassir-sed-din, who had attached himself to Houlagou.

† Coran, chap. i. ver. 20. This letter contains several quotations from the Coran, which seems strange from a Tartar general.

"To us, fortresses form no obstacles; armies do not stop us. Your prayers against us will not be heard, for you use prohibited meats, you do not keep your word, you violate agreements and betray faith, you profess heresy, and you love impiety and rebellion. Learn that you are condemned to abject misery and contempt; the day will come when you shall receive the ignominious chastisement of your pride, your excesses, and your impiety. You believe that we are Infidels; we know that you are impious, and that the Almighty has subjected you to our dominion. Those whom you most honour are in our eyes vile. Woe and terror be upon those who rise up before us! Grace and peace to those who find favour in our eyes!

"We have conquered the earth from the east to the west, and despoiled those who possessed riches; *we have carried away all vessels.**

"Choose then in your own mind the path of safety, and hasten to reply to this before war shall have kindled its fires and cast its spark upon you. Suddenly you will experience the most terrible calamities; in the twinkling of an eye your country shall become a desert, and you shall nowhere find a refuge. The angel of death will exclaim, 'Is there one of you that gives the least sign of life, or whose voice utters the lightest murmur?'† We act honestly in warning you. Explain your intentions promptly, lest chastisement come upon you unawares. Be on your guard; and when you shall have finished our letter, read the commencement of the *Bees*, and the end of *Sad*.‡

"We have scattered the diamonds of our words, it is for you to reply; and safety to him who chooses the way of safety!"

This insolent letter was received very coldly by Nassir, who replied in the same tone; and it is curious to see the

* Coran, chap. xviii. ver. 78. † Ibid. chap. xix. ver. 98.
‡ Two chapters so called in the Koran.

swelling pride of Tartar and Arab contending together, in epistles which are more like odd literary compositions than documents concerning public affairs.

Aleppo replies to Houlagou thus :—

"Say, O my God! Master of Empires! Thou givest dominion to whomsoever thou wilt: do thou help us. Praise be to God, the sovereign of the universe; health and benediction upon the Coryphæus of the envoys of God, the last of the prophets, Mahomet the unlettered, and upon all his family!

"We have made ourselves acquainted with the contents of the letter of your Highness the Sultan (may God give you grace to find the true way, and to know the truth), informing us that you were created in the wrath of God, and are cast against those who have merited his anger; that you are affected by no tears or complaints, and that God has taken pity out of your hearts. That is one of your great vices; such is the character of devils, and not of sovereigns! This spontaneous avowal disgraces you. *Oh! Infidels, I will not adore what you adore.** You are accursed in all books of revelation, you have been painted with the most abominable features, you have been pointed at by all celestial apostles, and we have known you since you were created. You are Infidels, as you yourself suspect, and is not the curse of God upon Infidels?† You say that we profess heresies, that we have broken our faith, that we have given ourselves up to rebellion and impiety. He who does not care for any consequences reminds us of our principles! It is as if Pharaoh had undertaken to praise God, he who denied the true faith!

"We are the true believers; to us no transgression can be imputed, and we give cause for no suspicion. To us was the Koran sent from Heaven, and the God whom we adore is eternal. We believe firmly in the revealed word, and we

* Coran, chap. xix. ver. 41. † Ibid chap ii. ver 89.

know how it ought to be interpreted; but assuredly for you was fire created, to consume your skin.

"When the heavens shall be rent, and the stars shall be dispersed, and the seas shall mingle their waters, and the sepulchres shall be overthrown. the soul will see the future of its whole life.*

"Is it not a strange thing to threaten lions with bruises, tigers with hyenas, and brave soldiers with the attacks of poor ragamuffins?

"Our steeds are from Barca,—our swords from Yemen,—our arms are renowned for strength from the east to the west. Our warriors spring on their prey like lions, our horses overtake all whom they pursue, our swords cut in pieces all whom they attack, and our blows are thunderbolts! Abusive words do not break our hearts, nor menaces cause us any fear. Resistance to you is obedience to God. If we kill you, our prayers will have been heard,—if you kill us, Paradise awaits us.

"You say, 'Our breasts are like rocks: we are as numerous as the grains of sand.' But is the butcher terrified at the number of the sheep? and will not a small fire consume a vast pile? We will not fly from death in order to live in disgrace. If we live we will be happy,—if we die, we will be martyrs. Shall not the soldiers of God triumph?† And you demand from us the obedience we pay to the head of the faithful, to the vicar of the Prophet! We will not obey you; certainly we shall prefer going to join him: you ask whether we will submit, *before the veil shall open*, and you shall reach us.

"The beads of your words are badly threaded. If the veil is rent, if fate shall be accomplished, it will then be seen who is in fault, who has been an apostate, returning to the worship of idols, and acknowledging more than one God.

"You have indeed said such strange things, that little more

* Coran, chap. xix. ver. L. † Coran, chap. v. ver 68.

was wanting that the earth should open, and the mountains be crumbled away. Tell your secretary, the composer of your letter, that notwithstanding his conciseness, he has not restrained himself within due bounds; and in truth, we care no more for your prose than for the sound of the *rabab*" (a kind of Persian violin), "or than for the buzzing of a fly; for you have repayed your benefactor with ingratitude, and have merited severe chastisement.

"Assuredly, we will keep a register of these discourses, and we will make them pay the punishment with usury.* You are playing with us with your lying threats; you have wished to show your eloquence. One might say to you 'You have remembered something; but you have forgotten a great many things.' You write, *The perverse shall one day know their fate.* Such is your apostrophe, and here is our answer. The commandment of God shall be fulfilled; do not hasten the fulfilment.

"Prince Nassir and the generals and warriors of Syria will not decline the combat; they await with impatience the neighing of your steeds, and the charge of your warriors: for they have made a vow to fight you. You had better not leap into hell, it is a bad resting place, nor strike with your sword upon a lion's mane. All will tell you that if you have arms strong in battle, that will be your best eloquence. You have no occasion to quote verses, nor compose letters, nor write histories. We await you, and God give the victory as it shall please him; we do not scatter diamonds of words; but we say what comes into our mind, and we excuse him who stammers. We salute you."

All this eloquence made small impression on the Tartar Houlagou, who immediately advanced his army, and laid siege to Aleppo. Twenty catapults played for five days against the town, and it was taken by assault on the 18th of

* Coran, chap. xix. ver. 78.

January, 1260. An incredible amount of treasure was found in it, and the carnage was still more horrible than at Bagdad.

The streets were choked up with corpses, and it is stated that 100,000 women and children were taken and sold for slaves in Little Armenia, or in the territories of Europeans. The Mongols were masters of Syria, and they dismantled the towns and citadels, and planted their garrisons as far as Gaza.

After the conquest of Syria, Houlagou was preparing to pass on to Jerusalem, deliver the Holy City from the hands of the Saracens, and restore it to the Christians; when he received the news that Mangou his brother was dead, and that the Tartars were waiting to proclaim him their Grand Khan. Mangou had been killed in China in the month of December, 1259, in a war against the Chinese Emperor.

Houlagou, therefore, was obliged to leave Syria, but he left an army of a hundred thousand men, under the command of a general named Kitou-Boga, who was said to be much attached to the Christians. Houlagou himself had been very favourably disposed towards them, and intended, it was said, to be baptized and make a public profession of Christianity. This welcome news was carried to Rome by a priest named John, who gave himself out for an envoy from Houlagou, and he asked, on behalf of the Tartar prince, that there might be sent to Persia a priest distinguished for purity of life and learning, who should complete the conversion of the "Governor of the West." Notwithstanding the ready confidence always felt in the truth of intelligence of this kind, experience had taught Christian powers by this time not to count much on the veracity of those who brought it; and since the envoy had no letter from Houlagou, nor any document to authenticate his mission, Alexander IV., though he wrote a congratulatory letter to the Tartar prince, charged the Patriarch of Jerusalem to verify the facts on which his congratulations were based.

"Our heart," says the Pope, "thrilled, and our soul dilated with joy, on learning from the Hungarian John, who calls himself your messenger, the happy news that God had mercifully opened the eyes of your mind;" and then, having expressed in warm and pious language the joy of the Church on learning the conversion of Houlagou, Alexander continues thus—"There is one consideration that will not have escaped your sagacity—namely, what a vast increase of power there would be for the subjugation of the Saracens, if the Christian armies should unite their strength with yours. Shielded by the buckler of Christian faith—supported by the Divine protection—you would attain the very summit of temporal grandeur, whilst at the same time you would secure eternal glory." In conclusion, the sovereign pontiff entreats Houlagou to reveal to the patriarch of Jerusalem the secret of his intentions, in order that thus prepared he may be able to take measures for the common cause with all convenient celerity.

It was, in fact, highly desirable to know what were the intentions of the Tartars; for the barrier that separated them from the crusaders was broken, now that Aleppo, Damascus, and Syria were almost entirely subject to them. Houlagou, while confiding his authority to Kitou-Boga, had ordered him to conquer Jerusalem and restore it to the Christians; and Kitou-Boga was with great good will setting about the execution of the order, when an unfortunate occurrence entirely put to flight his friendly feelings. The Christians of Sidon and of the castle of Beaufort had made a sally against the Saracens, in which they had carried off considerable booty, and the nephew of Kitou-Boga, being in the neighbourhood, hastened to the spot, and in the name of his uncle demanded his share of the prize. The Christians refused to give it up, charged the Tartars, and killed, along with others, the nephew of Kitou-Boga; and when the news of this untoward event was brought to the general, he mounted his horse and ordered an

immediate attack on Sidon, which he took, and destroyed the greater part of the fortifications. From that moment, says the monk Hayton, the Christians and Tartars had no confidence in each other any more.

The taking of Sidon was up to this time the first harm the Tartars had done the Franks; but there was now reason to apprehend that the latter would themselves have to repulse the formidable force that they had been trying to turn against the Saracens. The Tartars, in fact, did not long delay sending them a summons to submission, and the military Orders of Templars and Hospitallers, in whom piety and valour were so well blended, held a meeting, according to their custom, during the night, to deliberate upon the course to be taken. The Bishop of Bethlehem pronounced an anathema upon those who should be cowardly enough to yield—and the reply of the knights was to the effect, that they had not quitted the world and devoted themselves to God for the sake of living in ease and delight, but to die for Jesus Christ; the Tartars might, therefore, come when they would, they would always find the servants of Christ ready to defend the Christian law unto the death.

The Tartars, upon whom so many hopes had been founded, were now become objects of universal terror; and all Syria seemed affected by the same panic fear. Letters were written, and deputies sent to Europe to implore help from the kings of the West; and the report was soon current that Antioch and Tripoli were already in the hands of the Mongols. One envoy came even as far as England, where a council was assembled, and the people were enjoined to seek by prayer and fasting, and penitential tears, to move the mercy of Heaven to remove the dreadful scourge that was once more menacing Christendom.

On the intelligence being transmitted by the Pope to Paris, St. Louis convoked an assembly of lords and bishops, to discuss the means of averting a misfortune that seemed so immi-

nent. "A procession," says William of Nangis, "was ordered with litanies and orisons, and every one was to take care not to swear or take in vain the names of our Lord or his saints, and to keep himself from sin, and from a superfluity of garments and of meats." It was also ordained that for two years no tournament should be held, and that it should be forbidden to practise any game, except archery and shooting with the crossbow.

In the following year, 1261, the Pope convoked a council-general at Rome, to consider what measures could be taken to protect Christendom from the ferocious hordes that menaced it. The sovereign pontiff renewed his exhortations, and endeavoured to arouse the Christian princes, not only against the Mongols of Persia and Syria, but also against those who were marching upon Hungary in consequence of the refusal by King Bela of their offers of alliance—a refusal that had been suggested by the Pope. The most remote countries of Europe had to furnish a contingent of men and money; and envoys came in 1262, to announce to the Pope that Norway had all in readiness. When he dismissed them, Urban IV. gave them letters to the archbishop, and also to the Bishops of Bergen, the Orcades, and Stavanger, to urge them not to relax their efforts, since the succours that were looked for from them became every day more necessary.

While these preparations were going on, however, events were taking place that rendered them useless, or at least changed their object; for the Tartars were now flying before the Egyptians. The Queen of Aleppo had strengthened the forces of the Couttouz Sultan of Egypt, who had now no longer anything to dread from his Syrian rival, and finding his power so much increased, resolved on endeavouring to drive out the Tartars. He advanced therefore to Acre, where he entered into a treaty with the Christians, and after having given three days to the refreshment of his army, entered Galilee, where Kitou-Boga was encamped, in the plain of Tiberias,

near a place called the Fountain of Goliah. He surprised the camp, and after several engagements, defeated and killed Kitou-Boga, with several thousands of his Tartars,—carried off his children as prisoners,—pursued those who fled, and taught men that the Tartars were not invincible. A victory gained over the Mongols was in fact a thing hitherto unheard of in these countries, and this of the Sultan of Egypt powerfully reanimated the hopes of the Mussulmans, whilst its effects were in no less degree disastrous for the Christians. At Damascus the unexpected victory was no sooner proclaimed than the Mussulmans rushed tumultuously to the houses of the Christians, pillaged them from top to bottom, massacred the inhabitants, and then burnt the churches of St. James and St. Mary.

Symptoms of declining strength in the power of the Tartars were soon manifest at many points, and in no long time produced considerable modifications in their policy. The dismemberment of the vast empire of Tchinguiz-Khan was consummated; and though even its divisions formed powerful states, their power was not so great as to make Europe and Asia tremble, and we shall soon see these haughty Mongols, who before would scarcely deign even to receive ambassadors from other nations, and offered only the alternatives of submission or destruction, bending their pride to make the first advances to Christian sovereigns, and more especially to the kings of France, who were in the East generally regarded as the most powerful of all.

Houlagou, as we have seen, quitted Syria to ascend the imperial throne, left vacant by the death of Mangou-Khan; but he came too late, and found the place taken, Kublai, his brother, having been elected emperor in his stead, in the year 1260. This was the prince who to the north of China, already subjected by the Tartars, added the territory of Mangy, or Southern China. He even attempted the conquest of Japan, but with no other result than the loss of his fleet. At other

points, however, he was more fortunate. He rendered Tong-king, Cochin China, and Pegu, tributary to his empire, and subjugated Thibet, and the country which separates the course of the Ganges from the rivers of Eastern Asia; but no narrative extant affords so adequate an idea of Kublai and his vast dominions, as the travels of Marco Polo, of which we shall presently speak.

Whilst this potentate was extending his conquests in the extreme East, the Mongol Empire in the West was undergoing divisions from which resulted some curious changes in the relations of the Tartars with the Persians and the Franks. The first missionary sent to a Mongol chief had, as we have seen, incurred great danger, and the question had been mooted of the expediency of skinning him alive, and stuffing his skin with straw. The envoys of St. Louis had been treated with less barbarity, but with excessive pride and insolence. But the successes of the Mamelukes of Egypt now produced some striking modifications in the tone and behaviour of the Mongols. The victory gained over his army at the Fountain of Goliath had tended greatly to enlighten Houlagou as to the possible advantages of an alliance with the Christians; and no sooner had the news reached him than he assembled an army, summoned the princes of Georgia and Armenia, and despatched emissaries to the Frank princes in the East, to induce them to march against the Sultan of Egypt and the other Mussulmans. It is difficult to imagine what might have been the issue of such an expedition, had it not been checked at the outset by the death of Houlagou. The Franks flattered themselves that if they had met with success, the Holy Land would have been given up to them by the Tartars, without any difficulty, as the latter could not accustom themselves to the excessive heat of its climate. They hoped also that they would have been exempted from all taxes and tributes, like the Christians of Armenia and Georgia; but it is not probable that the same favours would have been granted them, unless on the same

conditions; that is to say, they would have had to recognise the sovereign authority of the Khan, and to follow him into whatever part of his empire he should choose to carry his arms.

Houlagou died in his camp, on the banks of the Tchogatou, in the month of February, 1265, at the age of forty-eight, and was buried in an island in the midst of the Lake of Ormia, where he had built a fortress to contain his treasures. Some months afterwards followed the death of Doghouz-Khatoun, who had held the first rank among his wives. "This princess," says the historian Raschid, "was brought up in the Christianity professed by the Keraite nation to which she belonged, and she constantly protected her fellow believers; it was through her influence that Houlagou was induced to show so much favour to the Christians, who, profiting by this period of prosperity, built churches in all the provinces of his domin ions. At the entrance of the Ordou of Doghouz-Khatoun, there was always a church whence the sound of bells could be heard."

The deaths of Houlagou and his wife were deeply deplored by the Christians of Asia. "At the beginning of Lent," exclaims Bar-Hebræus,* "died Houlagou, whose wisdom, magnanimity, and great exploits have no parallel; and in the summer following, his faithful queen Doghouz-Khatoun also quitted this world. By the disappearance of these two stars, the protectors of the Christian faith, the Christians of the whole world have been plunged into sorrow and mourning." Another writer of the time† goes so far as to compare them to Constantine and Helena. These strange exaggerations prove

* Bar-Hebræus, Dyn. xi. p. 542.

† "The great and pious king, the master of the world, the hope of the Christians, Houlagou-Khan, died in the year 1265, and was soon followed by his excellent wife, Doghouz-Khatoun. The Lord knows that they were scarcely inferior to Constantine and his mother Helena. As Houlagou loved the Christians, all nations which professed the true faith obeyed him willingly and were of great help to him."—"Hist. des Orphelians," in the "Memoires sur l'Arménie" of M. Saint Martin.

how great were usually the sufferings of the Christians, since the smallest manifestations of good-will were capable of inspiring such warmth of gratitude.

Houlagou was succeeded by his son Abaga, who, though he placed a Mussulman at the head of his council, was nevertheless a friend to the Christians, either from policy, or from complaisance to his wife, who was of that faith. Houlagou, a short time before his death, had asked in marriage a daughter of Michael Paleologus, the Emperor of Byzantium, and the latter had bestowed on him the hand of one of his natural daughters, named Maria, whose mother was of the family of Diplovatatzi. Theodosius de Ville Hardouin, archimandrite of the convent of Pantocrator,* or, according to others,† Euthymius, the Greek Patriarch of Antioch, was charged to conduct her to the King of the Tartars; but on her arrival at Cesarea she heard of his death. She continued her journey nevertheless, and arriving at the court of Abaga, was married by him, and thus became a Queen of the Mongols. She had, it appears, some interest in the glory of her religion, for she petitioned her father to send two painters to decorate the Greek church of Tauris.

Abaga, however, would in all probability scarcely have been induced by his wife's feelings of piety to make common cause with the Europeans, had not the Sultan of Egypt, eager to avenge on the Christians the evils they had brought upon Islam, attacked the King of Armenia, at the same time that he laid siege to Antioch. One of the vassals of the Mongol sovereignty, and the most powerful of the principalities founded by the Crusaders, being thus menaced at the same moment, the common danger unavoidably led to a union between the Christians and the Tartars; and Europe saw with joy the Mussulman power of Egypt engaged with a formidable enemy who had extended his frontiers to the confines of Syria. The less

* Du Cange, Anc. Byzant., p. 285. Pachymeres, vol. iii. p. 1044.

† Aboulfaradge, Chron. Syr. p. 567. Bar-Hebræus, p. 567.

she was herself disposed, at that epoch, when the enthusiasm for the Crusades was almost extinct, to make any efforts for the succour of the Syrian colonies, the more she was inclined to count on the assistance of the Mongols.

On the other hand, the effects of the division of the Mongol empire began to be felt. The Tartar princes could not as sovereigns dispose of such armies as they had commanded as generals of the Grand Khan, and their neighbours on the North and East, instead of being auxiliaries, as they were formerly, now often had interests opposed to theirs. The Sultan of Egypt found means to excite the jealousy of the Khans of Kiptchak, and concluded a treaty with them, by which they agreed to invade the territories of Abaga every time that he should attack the Egyptians. To counterbalance the effect of this treaty, therefore, the Mongols sought the alliance of the Christians, and Abaga wrote to the Pope a letter that he sent by an ambassador. Several letters had been received at Rome before, purporting to come from this Tartar prince; but, as they were written in Latin, they could not be supposed to come directly from Abaga, but must have been the work of some of the Christians of the East, acting under his orders, or possibly sometimes without them. However that may have been, this letter of 1267 was written in Mongol, and when it came there was nobody in Rome who could read it, so that the Pope was obliged to get the envoy who brought it, to give him some verbal information of its contents.

This explains how the Pope, in his reply to the Tartar prince, came to appear so entirely satisfied of his conversion, and also the supposition that Abaga had shared in the rejoicing at the victory of Charles of Anjou over Manfred. Abaga, according to the testimony of Hayton himself, was not a Christian, and the defeat of Manfred, though so interesting a matter to the Holy See, must have been of very small importance to the Khan of Persia. These two points were most

likely introduced into the letter by the person who undertook the translation of it, in order to render the court of Rome more favourably disposed to the Tartars.

Abaga really manifested an intention of proceeding with his father-in-law, Michael Paleologus, to the help of the Christians against the Saracens; and he asked the Pope to point out the route to be taken by the Christian kings in the expedition they were preparing, in order that he might concert measures in accordance with them.

Clement replied in the following terms; —

"We have received lately a noble messenger from your greatness, who presented to us letters from you, and from which we have learned what he has verbally reported to us. No person in our palace being capable of reading those letters, since you did not, according to your custom, write in the Latin tongue, we were obliged to depend upon the words of your messenger, and reply accordingly to your magnificence.

"Before all things, we return thanks to God, the giver of all good, that he has been pleased to enlighten the eyes of your heart, and cause you humbly to adore his only Son, crucified for the salvation of the human race. You rejoice, you say, at the victory we have gained in the kingdom of Sicily over Manfred, the natural son of the ex-Roman emperor. This rash usurper fell on the field of battle, with a multitude of perfidious Christians and Saracens, losing at the same time his life and his throne, by the powerful hand of our dear Son in Jesus Christ, Charles of Anjou, on whom we had bestowed the kingdom. This is what the kings of France and Navarre*, followed by a considerable number of counts, barons, and knights, have determined to do with respect to the Holy Land. Having taken the sign of the cross, they are preparing to combat, valiantly and powerfully, the enemies of re-

* Thibaud, King of Navarre.

ligion. Already in other countries many lords and men of the common sort, animated by their example, have resolved to exalt with all their might the name of Jesus Christ, and destroy the power, the religion, and even the very name of the Saracens. You write to us that you propose to join your father-in-law, and come to the help of the Latins, and for this we return you abundant and fervent thanks. As for the route which our people design to take, we cannot inform you of that until we shall have consulted the other sovereigns, but we will communicate to them your intentions, and those of your father-in-law, in order that they may the better deliberate on what they will have to do; and we will inform your magnificence by a messenger of what shall have been resolved upon. Persevere, then, great prince, in your salutary resolution, for you may trust that God, if you serve Him faithfully, will secure and exalt your throne. In Him is all power, and might, and empire, and the hearts of kings are in his hands. With a glance of his eye he rules the universe, and none can resist his will."*

Clement X. doubtless did not fail to inform the Kings of France and Navarre, and even the King of England, of the offer of Abaga, though no written proof that he did so is to be found in the chronicles of the time; in other countries, however, the effects of this negotiation become visible. We find that in 1269, an ambassador from Michael Paleologus and the Grand Khan of the Tartars came to Valence James, King of Arragon, and the historian Mariana asserts that this was the second embassy the King of Arragon had received from the Tartars, and that these new ambassadors came in company with one John Alaric, a native of Perpignan, who had been sent to Tartary in answer to the first mission.

The ambassadors stopped to rest at Barcelona, but Alaric passed on to Toledo, and having been admitted before a Junta

* The Pope's letter is dated Viterbo, 1267.

of the principal nobles of the country, he gave them a detailed account of what he had seen, and of the result of his embassy. The king, notwithstanding his great age, desired to go in person to the Crusade, but his son-in-law, Don Alphonso, and the Queen of Castile endeavoured to deter him from this proceeding, by representations of the treachery of the Greeks and the ferocity of the Tartars; but their entreaties, and even tears, were of no avail. The result of his enterprise is well known,—that he was cast by a tempest on Aigues Mortes, and compelled to return to his dominions.*

It would have been far better for the Christian powers to have accepted the overtures of Abaga, and entered boldly into the confederation that he proposed to them: but the fatal expedition to Tunis in 1270, in which the Mongols could take no part, forfeited the advantages of an alliance so desirable for the Crusaders.

Edward, the eldest son of the King of England, was the only one who went direct to the Holy Land; but his arrival was not sufficient to change the aspect of affairs; while Abaga, occupied in distant wars, could not even afford succour to the King of Armenia, who found himself obliged to treat with the Sultan of Egypt, in order to save his dominions, and to obtain the liberty of his son, who had been taken prisoner by the Saracens.

As soon, however, as Abaga had concluded the affair that had detained him in the remote East, he hastened to encounter the Sultan of Egypt, who had entered Asia Minor. He attacked him with a powerful army, and drove him from the kingdom of Turkey, which he offered, it is said, to Hayton, King of Armenia. But the latter was wise enough to refuse so dangerous a present, which would only have served to irritate the Sultan of Egypt against him.

He contented himself with asking Abaga to co-operate in

* Mariana, vol. i. p. 655.

delivering the Holy Land from the Saracen yoke; and the Khan agreed to a proposal so conformable to the interests of his policy, and again sent ambassadors to the Pope and other Christian sovereigns, in order to come to an understanding with them upon the projected expedition.

These ambassadors, six in number, arrived at Lyons at the beginning of 1274, for the second council, where, thanks to the exertions of the Franciscan Nuncios, repeatedly sent to Constantinople, the Greeks and Latins came to an harmonious agreement in matters of faith. Gregory X. hastened to announce to Abaga the arrival of his ambassadors, and the good reception they had met with; he said also that he had read the letters of which they were the bearers, and that before the Christian army set out on its march, he would send pre cise information on all points. The Tartar envoys were then introduced to the Council at its fourth sitting on the 6th of July, 1274; and the Pope made them sit opposite to him at the feet of the patriarchs. The letters they had brought were read, apparently according to the version they had themselves given of the contents; and at the next meeting of the Council on the 16th of July, the envoy who had acted as spokesman to the rest, and two of the most distinguished Tartars who accompanied them, were baptized by Pierre de Tarentaise, Cardinal of Ostia, afterwards Pope Innocent V. The Sovereign Pontiff on this occasion presented some costly robes to the Tartars, and he always made a point of having them present at all the religious ceremonies, with the pomp and splendour of which they were greatly struck; but it does not appear that this solemn embassy ever had any very important political results.

The Mongol envoys who went to England were also received with great attention, but the success of their mission was just as little decisive as in France. Edward I. replied to Abaga in a letter written in Latin, and dated from *Bellus lo*

cus regis, January 26th, 1274. It was to the following effect:—

"The devout Friar David of the order of Preachers, chaplain to Friar Thomas, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and legate of the Apostolic See, has arrived at our court, and presented to us letters addressed by you to the Holy Father, and to the other Christian sovereigns. We have therein seen the affection you bear to the Christian religion, and the resolution you have taken to lend assistance to the Christians of the Holy Land against the enemies of Christendom. We pray your magnificence to execute this holy project; but we cannot at the present moment tell you anything certain touching the epoch of our arrival in the Holy Land, and the passage of the Christians, since at this present writing nothing has been settled by the Sovereign Pontiff relatively to the said passage; but as soon as we shall ourselves know anything positive thereupon, as we speedily shall, we will not fail to instruct you of it.

"We recommend to the care of your mightiness the Holy Land, and all the Christians of the East.

All these attempts at coalition had, however, very little effect, for notwithstanding the increasing power of the Mussulmans, the losses of the Crusaders, and the exhortations of the Sovereign Pontiff, the princes of Europe were then too seriously occupied with cares of their own nearer home, for them to think much of profiting by the alliance of the Tartars.

Two years afterwards, in 1276, under the pontificate of John XXI., two strangers, calling themselves ambassadors from Abaga, arrived at Rome. They stated their names to be John and James Vassili, and being admitted to the Assembly of Cardinals, they explained the object of their mission, partly *vivâ voce*, and partly from letters that they had in their hands. It was a repetition of the offers of the Tartar monarch, who undertook to afford succour to the Christian armies

if they would proceed to Syria, and even to furnish them with any provisions of which they might have need.

Neither John XXII., nor his successor Nicholas III., would undertake to give a positive answer to Abaga's ambassadors, but induced them to go themselves to inquire into the intentions of the Christian kings; and, as in the former instance, some of the envoys went to Spain to try and excite the princes of Arragon and Castile to an expedition to Syria, whilst others proceeded to France and England with the same intention, and somewhat better prospects of success. This is what William of Nangis reports concerning their arrival at the court of Philip III. of France.*

"At the time, which was that of the Incarnation of our Lord, in the year 1276, there came messengers from the King of the Tartars to King Philip of France, who said that the said King of the Tartars had sent them to say, that if the Christian kings would go into the East against the Saracens, he would assist them.

"When they had sojourned a long time in France, they went to the King of England, and told him the same as they had said to the King of France." This same historian adds, that some doubt was entertained whether these envoys were not spies, for they were evidently not Tartars, either by birth or education, but Christians of Georgia. Philip III. nevertheless had them brought to the abbey of St. Denis, where he was then celebrating Easter.

One of the circumstances connected with these envoys may, especially as they were Georgians, inspire some doubts of their sincerity, namely, their keeping up the fiction of the conversion of the Grand Khan, with which their predecessors had entertained the Pope and the cardinals. According to them, Kublai, the supreme master of all the Tartars, had received baptism, and desired the Pope to send him some persons well

* Vol. v. p. 535.

versed in divine things, in order that they might instruct his children. The negotiators doubtless considered that they could say nothing more likely to be agreeable to the Pontifical Court, and it does not appear that the repetition of the tale had at all lessened its effect with those who were so very willing to believe it: so easy is it to lap oneself in a sweet delusion concerning what one desires very eagerly. The conversion of the Mongols was an object of much solicitude to the Church and the Sovereign Pontiff, but it does not appear that the Tartars really had more sympathy for the Christians than for any other nation, but they crushed them all indifferently whenever their policy or their interest seemed to demand it. They feigned friendship for Christianity and Christian princes merely that they might obtain the assistance they needed; but they had much more regard for their own armies than for any religion whatever. It is true, however, that the Christian missionaries scattered about the further parts of Asia did at this time receive a friendly reception from the Grand Khan, who was occupied in endeavouring by all methods to effect the civilisation of his still barbarous subjects. With this view he received equally well all religious foreigners of whatever country or creed. But Kublai Khan was, nevertheless, in no respect a Christian, and from the year 1260, he had made his choice of the religion which he desired his subjects to embrace. Following the example of the ancient kings of India, of several Tartar princes, and of some Chinese emperors of the great dynasty of Thang, he had created a pontiff, under the title of "Master of the Kingdom," and had honoured with this office a young Buddhist ecclesiastic, a Thibetan by birth, who had been for seven years a great favourite with him. It was through this person, whose family held the office of high priest to the kings of Thibet for ten generations, that the succession of the ancient Buddhist patriarchs was continued, and that of the Grand Lamas commenced; and it was also since his time that Lamaism, or re-

formed Buddhism, became the common religion of all Mongols. History informs us that the adoption of a new worship was with Kublai an affair of policy rather than of conviction; and, indeed, one must know very little of the Chinese, amongst whom Kublai had been educated, to suppose that conviction had usually had anything to do with the religious systems accepted by their princes.

Even though it were proved that Kublai had been baptized, as the two Vassalis asserted, we could not from that infer that he was a Christian, but merely that he had consented to add one ceremony more to those of the Tao-sse, the Buddhists, and the Literary Sect, all of which he practised indifferently.

Such is the effect of the agreement which the Mongol emperors, and in our own time the sovereigns of the Mantchoe dynasty, have found means to establish between the disciples of Confucius, who worship nothing, and the common-place idolatry of the polytheists of India and China, who worship everything. "There is but one religion," it is declared; "but the sages of each country have varied its forms according to time and place."

Whatever doubts may have existed concerning the alleged conversion of Abaga and Kublai, Pope John XXII. determined to verify a fact so important to the Church, and proposed therefore to send with the two Vassalis several missionaries to Tartary; and though this project was retarded by his death, it was put in execution by his successor Nicholas III. This pontiff chose five monks of the Franciscan order, named Gerard de Prato, Antony of Parma, John of St. Agatha, André of Florence, and Matthew of Arezzo, who were to be the bearers of letters to Abaga and Kublai, and also to labour in the conversion of the Mongols. The letter remitted to Abaga by the Pope's envoys was as follows*:—

* Odor Raynald, vol. iv. ann. 1278, No. 18, p. 282. Wadding, "Annales Minorum," vol. v. p. 96.

"To the Excellent and Magnificent Prince Abaga, the illustrious king of the Oriental Tartars, may he walk in the way of truth!

"The holy Roman Church is thrilling with joy in the Lord, for the happy news that the messengers of your magnificence have reported both verbally and in writing to our predecessor Pope John and our brethren the cardinals. These letters say that if a Christian army should disembark in the Holy Land, you promise to provide for its wants, and to assist it in person to the utmost of your power, against the enemies of the Christian faith. You declare at the end of these letters that we may put entire confidence in what these envoys may say to us on your behalf, and they have told us things pleasing to God, and pleasing to our predecessor and our brethren, amongst whom I then fulfilled the functions of cardinal. What happy news are these, and how worthy to be received with holy rapture, since they involve the salvation of so many souls! We speak of the intelligence thus conveyed to us, that our dear son in Jesus Christ, your uncle Kublai, Grand Khan, Emperor and Moderator of all the Tartars, has been baptized, and solicits the Church of Rome to send him some qualified persons to instruct you, your children, and your people in the Christian religion.

"Let our mother Church rejoice that by the merciful clemency of Jesus Christ her spouse, it is given to her to regenerate so many children in the waters of baptism. Let the pastor of the Church rejoice that in his day Christianity has received an addition to the flock of countless nations! What gladness will there be in the celestial courts, at the safe return of so many lost sheep, since, according to the gospel, there is more rejoicing there over one sinner who repents, than over ninety and nine just men who need no repentance. Oh! what happy days are ours if it should be permitted us to furnish to the celestial courts such a subject of joy! Truly are these things that your majesty announces to us vast and sublime. The

finger of God has assuredly touched your heart, since you are inflamed by such holy zeal that you are willing to place at the service of Christ, and against His enemies your own person, the strength of your people, and your whole empire, with all its power and resources." The Pope then concludes by earnestly recommending to the Tartar prince the missionaries that he is sending to him, and the Christians resident in his dominions. The letter to Kublai Khan was precisely to the same effect, and his holiness at the same time conferred, by letters patent of the same date, very extensive powers upon the five Franciscans. He authorises them to preach the word of God in all countries subject to the Tartars, to baptize Abaga, his children, his subjects, and all others who are willing to be converted to the unity of the Christian faith, and to do, collectively and individually, all that may contribute to the glory of God and the propagation of the holy faith.*

The historians of the period do not afford us sufficient details to appreciate the results of this new mission to the Tartars. The barbarism of the Mongols, the indifference of the Chinese, the prejudices of the idolaters, the rivalry of the Nestorians, who had previously made considerable progress in those countries, and moreover the ignorance of the missionaries of the languages and customs of the nations they were commissioned to evangelise, must have opposed very formidable obstacles to their success. It may be conjectured, nevertheless, that their exertions were not altogether fruitless,—for we hear that the provincial of the Franciscans established in Hungary wrote to the sovereign pontiff to beg him to send a bishop to Tartary, since "several of our brethren who reside amongst the Tartars, and preach the faith of Jesus Christ to them with zeal, have, by divine grace, converted great numbers of them."†

* Wadding, "Annales Minorum," vol. v. p. 40.

† "Quam plures fratres ejusdem ordinis inter Tartaros commorantur, qui fidem Christi gratiosis studiis annunciantes eisdem, multos ex eis ad fidem ipsam, divina co-operante gratia conventerunt."—Wadding, vol. v. p. 42.

Pope Nicholas III., in consequence of this application desired Philip, Bishop of Firman, and Legate Apostolic, to consecrate a bishop to whom he should assign whatever revenues might be raised from those countries, and which would otherwise accrue to the Holy See. History has not recorded the name of the bishop sent, nor the results of his ministry; but the necessity for creating episcopal sees, affords in itself a proof that Christianity must have made considerable progress in Upper Asia.

CHAPTER VIII.

Nestorian Propagandism in High Asia. — The Apostate Ahmed. — Argoun, Khan of Persia. — His Letter to Honorius IV. — Letters of Nicholas IV. to Argoun. — Queen of Touktan. — Argoun and Philip the Fair. — News from the Mission in China. — Conversion of several Tartar Princes. — Letter of the Pope to Gazan, Son of Argoun. — His Wife and Child condemned to be burnt alive. — Attempts at Alliance between the Tartars and Christians. — Empire of Kublai. — Religions of China. — Confucius. — Lao-Tze. — Buddha.

The success of the Catholic missions in Tartary could not, it must be admitted, be compared with the propagation of Nestorianism in those countries. Not only did the Nestorians possess numerous churches in Tartary, but they were spread throughout the Chinese empire, and their disciples were multiplying from day to day, as we learn from their historians and from the testimony of Marco Polo. At Khanbalik, or Pekin, which Kublai had made the capital of his empire, they had a Metropolitan church, dependent on the Patriarch or Catholicos of Seleucia. In 1279,* the Metropolitan of China having died, the Patriarch John Denha hastened to send him a successor, and he had ordained for this office a certain

* Asseman. "Bibliotheca Orientalis."

Simeon-Bar-Kalig, formerly a bishop in Khorassan, but who before setting out for his post at Pekin, revolted against the Patriarch, and was consequently arrested by him, thrown into prison, in the monastery of St. Abraham, in the town of Sahaka, and forfeited of all his possessions. The Metropolitan of Pekin, however, found means to escape from his dungeon, and fled to the mountains, but was retaken by the mountaineers, and brought back to the Catholicos, who again sent him to prison. A few days afterwards, he died, as well as several bishops who had been the accomplices of his revolt and shared in his captivity; and it was believed they all perished of a violent death by order of the Patriarch.

In the meantime, two monks, belonging to the nation of Oigours, presented themselves to the Patriarch Denha. They had left China and gone on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to visit the place sanctified by the life and death of the Saviour of men; and the Patriarch now created one of them, named Jaballaha, Metropolitan of Pekin, in the place of Simeon-Bar-Kaly. Jaballaha was just on the point of setting out to take possession of his see, when John Denha died, and a Tartar chief, who was related to these two monks, in announcing the death of the Patriarch to Abaga, pointed out Jaballaha as worthy to be his successor; though Aboulfarage reports that he was a rude and illiterate man, though pious.*

Abaga, in consequence of this recommendation, immediately issued a proclamation, by which he ordered the consecration of Jaballaha to the dignity of the Patriarchate, and the Nestorian bishops, docile to the injunctions of the Khan of the Mongols, betook themselves in all haste to Seleucia, and proclaimed with pomp and solemnity the new Patriarch or Catholicos. The other Oigour monk, named Barsuma, the companion of Jaballaha, was made a bishop in his own country.

* "Eum rudem quidem et indoctum, sed pium tamen fuisse."—Aboulfaradje apud Assemani, vol. xiii. p. 257.

All these facts are related to show that if the Nestorian Christians did succeed in rendering themselves popular among the Tartars, it was much at the expense of their dignity and independence. They did not so much convert these barbarous hordes, as submit to their yoke, and the servile condition into which the Nestorian bishops had fallen is obvious from their having been willing, at a word from a Tartar prince, to place an Oigour monk at the head of their church. If the Franciscans had fewer proselytes, it may be because they were more tenacious of the purity of their doctrines and the integrity of their characters.

Abaga was just preparing to undertake a new war against the Mussulmans, when he perished by poison, in the year 1282. The poison was said to have been administered to him by a Mussulman at a banquet, of which he partook, after having celebrated Easter with the Christians.

Tagoudar, his brother and successor, was at first the friend, but afterwards the bitter enemy, of Christianity. This prince had been baptized in his youth, under the name of Nicholas, and on his first accession to the throne he showed such favour to the Christians and their religion as to build a great number of churches in Assyria and Mesopotamia; and he published throughout his empire an edict, by which he exempted from taxes and tributes all monasteries, monks and bishops. But this gracious disposition was of brief duration. He became a Mussulman, took the name of Ahmed and the title of Sultan, and then persecuted the Christians and destroyed their churches.

Far, too, from continuing the negotiation for an alliance with the Christian powers, which Abaga had opened, he desired to form one with the Sultan of Egypt, and he hastened to send thither the Kadi of Sebaste, to announce his conversion to Mahometanism, offer his friendship to the Sultan, and undertake to propagate everywhere the faith that he had just embraced. This prince, therefore, who, but a short time be

fore had been counted on as the warm friend of the Christians, had now become a pitiless tyrant to them, and was possessed by so fanatical a zeal for the law of Mahomet, that he endeavoured to extirpate the very name of Christianity. The punishment of exile or death was proclaimed as the penalty of worshipping Jesus Christ; and during these persecutions a great number of the Franciscans perished in dreadful tortures.*

The conduct of the apostate Ahmed naturally excited the indignation and hatred of all the Christians and their numerous friends, and awakened no pity or sympathy in the Mussulmans. The Sultan of Egypt received the envoys of the new convert with much distrust, and when they arrived at Biroh, he sent orders to his lieutenants to watch them closely, so that no one of the people of God might have access to or converse with them. They were brought into Aleppo secretly, in the night, and afterwards taken to Damascus and Cairo in the same stealthy manner. They were then presented to the Sultan, kissed the ground before him, delivered their letter, and said what they had been ordered to say. The letter was written in Arabic, and had thirteen seals; its superscription was in an unaccustomed form, running thus:—

"In the name of the most merciful God, by the power of God, and under the auspices of the Kha-khan, this from Ahmed to the Sultan of Egypt."

The Sultan apparently did not admire this formula, for in his answer, he mimicked its style in a sort of affected way, and dryly replied to Ahmed's epistle, word for word. The ambassadors then received presents and were sent back with the same precautions that had been observed on their entrance.

In the following year, while the Sultan was at Damascus, Ahmed made a second attempt, but it does not seem to have succeeded better than the first. The Emir left Aleppo to receive the new ambassadors; into whatever city they en

* See Wadding, vol v. p. 128.

tered, it had to be in the night; their tents and arms were taken from them; they were watched like prisoners, and prohibited from holding communication with any one. Ahmed did not, therefore, profit much by his apostacy; it only served to isolate him completely between the Mussulmans, who could not trust, and the Christians, who abhorred him.

The Mussulmans were accustomed to regard the Mongols as enemies almost as bitter as the Crusaders themselves, and they could not believe in the sincerity of the new sentiments professed by them; whilst the numerous vassals of the Mongols, who were attached to Christianity, and the partisans of the ancient Tartar religion, alike felt the strongest dissatisfaction with the conduct of Ahmed. The Tartar nations were accustomed to the Christian ceremonies, and averse to a sect which they had fought against so long, and whose pontiff they had dethroned; and they could not see without indignation this same sect established in the midst of them. The kings of Georgia and Armenia refused obedience to Ahmed. Kublai himself threatened him with his anger, for having wandered from the footsteps of his ancestors; and his nephew Argoun, the son of Abaga, raised against him the standard of revolt; defeated him in battle; took him prisoner, and had him beheaded in the presence of the army.

In the manifesto which Argoun published on this occasion, he states that the princes of the blood royal had, with one accord, driven Ahmed from the throne for having abandoned the ancient laws of the Mongols, to embrace the religion of the Arabs, a religion unknown to their forefathers: that they had sent to the Grand Khan to demand justice on this guilty man, and had placed him, Argoun, on the throne of Persia, to govern the countries situated between Djihoun, and the lands of the Franks. Ahmed had been in power only two years.

It would seem that the Khan Argoun owed his victory, in a great measure, to the Christians, who were then very numerous in the Tartar armies; and it is even said, that he had

decorated his standards and his arms with the cross, and triumphed over his enemies in the name of Christ; and that, moreover, he had had a coin struck which bore on one side the representation of the Holy Sepulchre, and on the other the words, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."*

The apostacy of Ahmed, if it was not the cause of his fall, was at least the pretext for it, and likely to make his successor feel the necessity of following an opposite course; and this, accordingly, Argoun did, as soon as he had seized on the throne of Persia. He had, in fact, scarcely received from the Grand Khan Kublai the confirmation of his power than he resolved to attack the Mussulmans, with the design, according to the historians of the epoch, of getting himself baptized at Jerusalem, as soon as he should have made himself master of it. He also, guiding himself in all things by the example of his father, Abaga, restored the churches that Ahmed had destroyed; and he put to death a great number of the Mussulmans, and declared war against the Sultan of Egypt. The kings of Armenia and Georgia came to his court, and the Christians of the East renewed their solicitations that he would rescue the Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels. It was probably at their suggestion that he wrote to Pope Honorius IV. a letter, the contents of which are not easy to make out, although a Latin translation of it has been preserved; many of the peculiarities of the Mongol style are traceable in this as in other documents of a similar nature; but the translator appears to have understood Mongol rather better than he did Latin, and has made so many mistakes that t is scarcely intelligible. Such as it is, however, it serves, as Abel Remusat has observed, to confirm the existence of the original in the Tartar language, for it is an almost literal translation from it. The very barbarism of the expressions

* Odor Raynald ann. 1285, No. 78.

and the blunders of which it is full, afford the best proof of its authenticity, and it is not impossible to any one acquainted with the events to which it alludes, and the relation therein indicated, to discover from it some curious particulars. Argoun first makes mention of the good will entertained by the Mongols, from the time of Tchinguiz-khan, "their first Father, for the Pope, the most serene King of the Franks, and the most serene King Charles of Anjou," and he alludes to the protection that they have always granted to the Christians, who have been exempt from tributes, and living in freedom in their country, "*et omnium Christianorum non dentur aliquid de tributum, et fiant franchi in sua terra*," and the favours heaped upon them by his grandfather, Houlagou, and the good Abaga, his father. He then goes on to speak of a certain *Ise-Turcimen* or *Tse*, the Interpreter, with several of his companions, who were sent as envoys, it would seem, to the court of the Pope and some other princes by the Grand Khan, and who had received from them costly robes and perfumes, *roba et tus*. He himself, he states, as soon as he had received the favour of the Grand Khan, that is to say, the investiture for the throne of Persia, thought of sending presents to the Pope, *ad domino sancto patri mittantur robas et tus*. He proposes to restore to the Christians all the advantages they have previously enjoyed, *et habemus in pensamentum de eos custodire, et facere gratiam*.

The long interval that had elapsed since the last embassy to the Christian princes is explained by the apostacy of Ahmed, who "*anno præterito Ameto erat intratus in moribus Saracenorum*," and who, for that reason, had not kept *the land of the Christians*. Finally, he promises to the Franks a portion of the land of *Scam*, that is to say, Egypt, "*terram Scami, videlicet Egypti*," and he desires the Christian princes to let him know by a man worthy of trust, in what place they propose to join their forces to those of the Mongols, so that the Khan and the Pope may annihilate the power of the Saracens. The

letter is dated in the *year of the Cock*, that is to say, 1285, on the 18th day of *Madii*, or May. The last words of the letter, *in coris*, seem to indicate that it was written in the city of Tauris, for it was there that the Mongol princes of Persia habitually resided.

What answer the Pontiff made to Argoun is not on record, but probably he contented himself with the customary exhortations to protect the Christians, and instruct himself in the true religion, without being very explicit on the subject of the assistance the Tartars asked for. At this epoch there was war among the Christian princes themselves, and in the midst of internal commotions, they could not think of going on a crusade to the Holy Land.

Argoun, however, was not discouraged, but pursuing his object with tenacious perseverance, sent, in 1288, a fresh embassy addressed to Nicholas IV., who had just ascended the pontifical throne. The principal person in this embassy was Barsuma, the Oigour monk, who had been appointed to a bishopriek by his travelling companion, Jaballaha, who had, as we have seen, himself been made Patriarch of the Nestorians by the influence of Abaga.

Barsuma spoke to the Pope of the design of Argoun to make war on the Saracens and take the Holy Land from them, and he described to him the flourishing condition of Christianity in Tartary and China, where Kublai had always shown himself favourable to the missionaries.

The Christian faith could hardly fail, in fact, to make considerable progress in High Asia. The monks of St. Francis were now scattered over these vast countries, and preaching the Gospel with zeal and perseverance. They had founded several missions, to which new apostles were continually proceeding, who counted as nothing the fatigues and dangers of these long and toilsome journeys if they could only make God known, and effect the salvation of souls.

Unfortunately Nestorianism was invading Tartary and China

at the same time. The Patriarch Jaballaha was an Oigour Tartar, and it is well known with what zeal he endeavoured to spread among his countrymen his peculiar faith. These Nestorian missions were, indeed, the greatest obstacle in the way of the Catholic preachers; and, if the extreme East was not Christianised at this time, it must be attributed to this cause, for the missionaries enjoyed then, both in China and Tartary, a liberty that was never afterwards accorded to them in equal measure.

Pope Nicholas IV. returned to Argoun, by Bishop Barsuma, a letter, in which he gave him a concise summary of Christian doctrine, and exhorted him to live in conformity to the law of God. As for Argoun's project of getting himself baptized when he should have taken Jerusalem, the Pope suggests that it would be better to do so beforehand, as such a step would obtain for him the protection of Heaven, and thus facilitate the conquest he desired. By getting himself baptized without delay, he would render himself more pleasing to God, and influence by his example a great number of his subjects. The Pontiff, addressed at the same time, the following congratulatory letter to Queen Touktan, the wife of Argoun, who he had been informed, professed the Catholic faith. The superscription and form of the letter are rather peculiar.

> "To my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, Touktan, the illustrious Queen of the Tartars, health and apostolic benediction.

"My very dear daughter, we have learned by credible testimony, that being enlightened by the torch of Catholic truth, you not only fulfil with fervour your religious duties, but also show yourself full of zeal in exhorting others to make profession of the law of Jesus Christ. These are things that will certainly render you pleasing in the eyes of the Divine Majesty, besides gaining for you the praise of men, and augmenting your renown. You acknowledge, like a respectful and

blessed daughter, the divine clemency, which has brought you out of the darkness of infidelity into the paths of truth and life. We implore you, in the name of the Son of God, to have the eyes of your soul raised towards the Lord, whose law you have embraced, to go on increasing in all good, and, like the industrious bee, never to cease gathering abund ant merits, that you may present them to the Lord your God, who will place in his celestial garner the sheaf of your good works."*

Nicholas wrote also to Denis, Bishop of Tauris, from whom he had received a letter with that of the Khan of Persia. He congratulates him on his zeal for the propagation of the faith amongst the Tartars, recommends the Franciscan missionaries to him, and exhorts him to hold fast to the true Catholic faith, of which he forwards a summary.

The whole of this correspondence of the Sovereign Pontiff, is of a purely religious character, and does not seem to bear any relation to the political object which the Tartars had chiefly in view; but we must suppose that the Pope did not lose sight of this point in the negotiation, but communicated to Philip the Fair the proposals brought by the ambassadors; since, in 1288, the king of France sent off an embassy to Persia.

These envoys, whose names have not been preserved, seem to have conducted themselves towards Argoun with a haughtiness, which the Khan complains of to Philip, although in a very moderate tone.

They refused to render the sovereign of Persia the honours required of them, under pretext that, this prince not being yet a Christian, they should be wanting in duty to their own master if they did him homage, that is, probably, prostrated themselves three times before him, according to custom.

A short time after this a new envoy arrived at Rome, from

* Wadding, vol. v. p. 170.

the court of the Tartar Khan, and afterward proceeded to France and England. This was a Genoese, named Buscarello di Gesulfo, who delivered to Philip the Fair a letter from Argoun in the Mongol language and the Oigour character, which has been found in the Archives of France.

Abel Remusat has made known the substance of this letter, and published a *fac simile* of it, from which M. Schmidt, a learned Orientalist of St. Petersburgh, perfectly acquainted with the Mongol language, has made a translation, word for word, into German, and also preserving the original Mongol form, in which the words *God* and *Kha-khan*, whenever they occur, begin a new line, and are even placed a little higher than the rest.

"Thou hast sent to me

"When the troops of the *Ilkkhan* shall march against Egypt, we will set out from here to join him. Having received this message on thy part, I tell thee that we purpose, trusting in

GOD,

to set off in the last month of the winter of the year of the Panther (1291), and to encamp before Damascus towards the 15th of the first month of spring. If you keep your word, and send the troops at the appointed moment, and if

GOD

should prosper us, when we have taken Jerusalem from that nation we will give it to you. But to fail us at the rendezvous would be causing the troops to march in vain; ought it to be so? and if afterwards we know not what to do, of what use is it? I shall send Mouskeria, who will tell you that if you send us ambassadors who can speak several languages, and who bring us presents, rarities, coloured pictures of the country of the Franks, we shall thank you, by the power of

GOD

and the fortunes of the

KHA-KHAN.

"Our letter is written at Coundoulen, on the sixth day of the first month of summer, in the year of the Ox."

Bascarello sent, with the letter of Argoun (which doubtless no one at the court of France could read), a diplomatic note, in which he developes the proposals of his master.

This is the substance of it:*—Argoun makes known to the king of France that he is ready to march with his army, in concert with the king, to the conquest of the Holy Land; that

* This is the original o. the curious note, three copies of which are preserved in the Archives of France:—

"Ci est la messagerie de Busquerel message d'Argon faite en l'an du buef de Coedelun.

"Premierement Argon fait assavoir au roi de France, comme a son frere, que, en toutes les provinces d'Orient entre Tartars, Sarrazins, et tout autre langue, ont certainne renommée de la grandesse, puissance et loyauté du royaume de France, et que les roys de France, qui ont esté à leurs barons, à leurs chevaliers, et à leur puissance, sont venue plusieurs fois en leide et conqueste de la Terre Sainte, à l'onneur du fils du la Vierge Marie et de tout le peuple crestien, et fait assavoir le dit Argon au dit roi de France, comme à son frère, que son corps, et son host est prest a amitié daler au conqueste de la dite Sainte Terre, et de estre ensemble avec le roi de France en cest benoit service.

"Et je Busquarel devant dit message et Argon dy qui si vous roi de France, venez en personne en cest benoit service, que Argon y amenra deux rois chrestiens Georgians qui sont sous sa seignourie, et qui de jour et de nuit prient Dieu destre en cest bien hoereus service, et on bien pooir damener avec eux XX mil hommes de cheval et plus.

"Encore dy je pour ce que Argon à entendu que grave chose est au roi de France et à ses barons de passer par mer tant de chevaux comme mestier est à euls est a leur gent, le dit roi de France porra recouvrer d'Argon, se il en a mestier, et il leu requiert, XX mil ou XXX mil chevaus en don ou en convenable prix.

"Item, se vous mous le roi de France voulez Argon vous fera appareiller pour cest benoit service par toute la Turquie bestail menu et bues, vaches et chamaux, grains et farine, et toute autre vitaille qui leur pourra trouver a votre volente et mandement.

"Item, ci poez voir bonnes enseignes, et grant presomtion de la bonte d'Argon; car, sitost comme il entendy qui Triple fu prise de Sarrazins, et qui il avait gran barons sarrasins dessouz sa seignourie, qui liez estoiente, et faisoient joie du damage, que estoit avenu aux chrestiens, et fist amener devant il quatre de touz les plus grans et les puissant barons sarrazins qui fustent en sa seignourie, et les fait tailler presentement, et ne souffre qui les corps en fussent enterre, mais voust et commanda que leu les laissast illnecques mangier aux chiens et aus oisiaux.

"Item, que tantost qui ledit Argon et sa suer mariée au fils te roi Davi de Georgie, il la fit tantost presentement crestiennes et lever.

"Item, que ceste jour de Pasque prochainement passe ledit Argon fist chanter en une chapelle qui'il fait porter à soi à Rabanata. (Rabanata n'est pas un nom propre; c'est un titre honorofique et de respect, qu'on donne aux eveques. Rabban veut dire maitre et Ata père. L'eveque en question etait Barsuma, dont nous avons deja parlé) evesque Nestorin que lantre on vous vint en message, et fist illnecques presentement devant il accomenier et recevoir le saint sacrament de l'autel plusieurs de ses barons Tartars.

"Encore, sire, vous fait assavoir ledit Argon que les vos grans messagés que vous autan il envoi astu ne li voudrent faire redevance ne honneur tels comme il est accoutume de faire de toutes manieres de gens, roys, princes et barons qui en sa

if the king should come in person, Argoun will be accompanied by two Christian kings of Georgia, his vassals, who can bring with them twenty thousand horse, or more; that, considering how difficult it would be for the King of France and his barons to send over the sea the great number of horses they will require, Argoun will furnish them with twenty or thirty thousand horses, either as a gift, or at a suitable price; that Argoun would also have provisions prepared in Turkey, and that there should also be delivered to the Franks, by his orders, sheep and cattle, camels, grain, flour, and all other kinds of provisions that could be procured. He finishes by expressing the surprise of Argoun that the ambassadors of the King of France had refused to salute him in the manner prescribed by Mongol etiquette, alleging that they would not kneel to him because he was not a Christian. He says that Argoun had three times requested them by his officers to comply with this custom, but that seeing they would do nothing of the sort, he admitted them nevertheless into his presence, and gave them a good reception; that, however, Argoun besought the King of France that, in future, he should send ambassadors whom he would command to do him such reverence and honour as was the custom of his court." This circumstance is worthy of notice, and shows how far the senti-

cour viennent. Car, si comme il disoient, il ne feroient pas votre honneur dagenoillet roy devant li pour ce quil nestoit mie baptisé ne lui crestien, et si les en fist il par trois fois requerre par ses grans barons; et quant il vit qu'il neu voloient autre chose faire, il les fist venir en la maniére qu'il voudrent, et si leur fist grant joie et mont les honnoura si comme il mersmes scevent. Si vous fit assavoir, sire, le dit Argon que si le dit votre message firent ce par votre commandement, il en est tout liez, car tout ce qui vous plaist li plait ausing, priant vous que si vous li envoyez yceuls ou autres messages, que vous voulliez souffrir et commander leur que il li facent tale reverence et honneur comme coustume et usage est en sa cour sanz passer feu.

"Et je Busquaril devant dit message d'Argon offre mon corps, mes freres, mes enfans et tout mon avoir a mettre tout nuit et jour au service de vous, monsieur le roi de France, et vous promet que si vous voles envoier messages au dit Argon, que je les menrai, et conduirai a mains la moitié de depens, travail, peril et double que il mont este quant a vous plaira."

Collated with three copies preserved in the archives of France.

ments of the Monguls were modified with respect to Christian princes. It is well known how barbarously they had formerly treated foreign ambassadors, sometimes threatening them to flay them alive, and stuff them with straw; we have seen too the furious and insolent missives which they addressed to the sovereigns of Asia and Europe, citing them, on pain of utter destruction, to submit immediately to their rule; but a few years had sufficed to change the character of their intercourse with Christians. The French envoys who visited the Khan of Tartary in 1288, absolutely refused to salute that prince by prostrating themselves before him, as Mongul etiquette required. "They would have failed," they said, "in what they owed to themselves, by rendering such homage to a king who was not a Christian." The Mongul prince not only endured this refusal without anger, but even wrote to the King of France, "that if his ambassadors had received orders to act thus, he was perfectly satisfied; for that what was pleasing to that monarch, pleased him also." This language is a strong proof of the influence of the French name at the Mongul court.

Historians have left us quite ignorant of the effect of the negotiation of Buskarello, and of the projects to which it might have given rise for the future; but it is at least certain, that it produced for the time no resolution in accordance with the views of Argoun or the interests of the Crusaders. After having accomplished his mission in France, Buskarello no doubt proceeded to England. His arrival was announced by a bull of Nicholas IV. to Edward I., giving him notice that the King of the Tartars was prepared to come to the assistance of the Holy Land. The Pope informed the king that a distinguished personage, *Biscarellus de Gisuefo*, an envoy from Argoun, had recently arrived, bringing him letters from that Tartar prince, in which he says, amongst other things, that he is quite ready to come, at the requisition of the Church, to the assistance of the Holy Land, at the time of the general pas-

sage, "*tempore passagii generalis*," that is, at the period fixed for the crusade. The said envoy being obliged to come to the King of England on this business, the Pope gave him this letter as an introduction, begging Edward to receive him kindly and to listen with attention to what he should say on the part of Argoun.

This bull is dated from Rieti, Sept. 30, 1289.*

It was in the course of the same year that important and interesting news was received at Rome respecting the state of the Christian religion in Upper Asia. It was no longer now by messengers or letters from Tartar princes, whose information and whose narrations were always equivocal, and founded on self-interest; but from missionaries who had been sent into Tartary by Bonagratia, General of the Franciscan order, and who came themselves to give a verbal account of their apostleship to the sovereign pontiff, after a residence of ten years in those distant regions. These indefatigable apostles had traversed the whole of the countries subject to the Mongul power; they had seen, face to face, those Tartar Khans whose names, exploits, and atrocities filled the world; and they had preached the Gospel to those innumerable populations whom the fury of war had collected from every point of the far East, to mingle them together and crush them in its frightful struggles. The testimony of these priests, of these "travellers for Jesus Christ," as they were then called, "*peregrinantium propter Christum*," was in the highest degree interesting, and their narration could not but excite, both at Rome and everywhere else, the most lively curiosity. They, in general, bore witness to the sincerity of the envoys of Argoun, confirmed their reports, and gave assurance that the chiefs of the Tartars were favourably inclined with respect to the Christians, and desirous of receiving the Gospel.

They expressed, above all, their admiration and gratitude

* Act. Rymer, vol. ii. p. 429.

for the signal services which had been rendered them by a noble Pisan named Jole, or Julio, who having been long settled in Tartary, had gained immense riches and great authority among the Mongols. His powerful protection had often come to their aid amidst the difficulties and embarrassments of their painful mission.

The chief of this phalanx of Franciscan missionaries was John de Monte Corvino, a priest of singular piety, great learning, and indefatigable zeal for the propagation of the faith; who had already made himself famous all through the East by his eminent qualities. Born in 1247, in a village at a short distance from Salerno, called Monte Corvino, he had assumed, according to the custom of the time, the name of the place of his birth. After having passed the greater part of his life in the duties of his mission in Tartary, he was at length appointed Archbishop of Pekin, where he died; but we shall speak, at a future time, of the labours and the success of this valiant apostle.

After a very short stay in the West, John de Monte Corvino and his companions set out again to resume their holy and laborious ministry in upper Asia. Pope Nicholas IV. gave them letters for Argoun and for Kublai, Emperor of the Tartars and Chinese, who had established his court at Khan Balik, or Pekin. We do not quote his letters, because they contain nothing remarkable. They resemble most of those, the translation of which we have already given, and contain only urgent and paternal exhortations to receive baptism, and to favour the Christians. Several authors (and, amongst others, Wadding, the celebrated historiographer of the Franciscan order) have asserted that Argoun and Kublai had been baptized; but this is improbable, as the sovereign pontiff, who doubtless knew the truth of the matter, would not, in that case, have insisted so much, in his letters, on the necessity of not deferring baptism. Nicholas IV. did not fail to write, by the same opportunity, to the noble Pisan Jole, a letter in

which the Pope praises his piety, and thanks him for his zeal in favouring the work of the missions. Notwithstanding the urgent exhortations of the sovereign pontiff, and the constant endeavours of the missionaries, we must confess, that the conversion of the Tartars did not yet make any very rapid or striking progress; still the apostolate was not struck with barrenness, and there were favoured spirits to whom God granted such a power of mental abstraction, that, in the midst of the tumult of the camp, they could meditate on eternal truths, and occupy themselves with the great business of salvation. It was reported, in the West, that several Tartars of distinction had received baptism, and were fervently fulfilling their Christian duties. Two princesses were mentioned, whose names were Dathanikan and Anichoamin, and a son of Argoun, who had received the name of Nicholas, and who publicly professed the religion of Jesus Christ. His mother, Erouk Khatoune,* had been for some time a Christian.

The first lieutenant and the physician of Argoun were also mentioned, who, not content with faithfully and piously accomplishing their own religious duties, were also full of zeal in bringing new worshippers to Jesus Christ.

This interesting news was brought to Rome in 1291, by a personage named Zagan, who was sent by Argoun, and charged with letters for the Pope and the King of England. Nicholas IV., after having examined those addressed to himself, sent the others to Edward. The Khan of Persia endeavoured, in these missives, as well as in the preceding ones, to persuade the Christians to make an expedition into Syria, in concert with himself. But, although the King of England had really taken the cross, the surrender of Ptolemais, which

* She was great-granddaughter of Ung-Khan, or Priest John, sovereign of the Keraites. This princess, says Hayton (chap. xlv.), was all her life much attached to the faith of Jesus Christ. She caused divine services to be celebrated for herself, and had always in her house a Christian priest and a chapel, so that her son Carbagande was baptized and named Nicholas.

had taken place in the same year, and the news of which had certainly reached Europe at the time when Zagan arrived there, was, no doubt, an obstacle to the realisation of the projects he came to forward. The loss of this important place prevented the princes of the West from thinking further of these distant wars. The Popes alone still endeavoured, though unsuccessfully, to renew them, and (singularly enough) they found, in the Tartar princes, auxiliaries as active, and more persevering, than themselves. The Franks abandoned, perhaps culpably, an alliance which might have ruined the future prospects of Islamism, changed the destinies of Asia, and brought innumerable populations into the great Christian family. The Tartars, for some time, seemed earnestly bent on the very course that would have been so beneficial to Christianity and civilisation, and they showed incredible perseverance in renewing negotiations, and in forming a coalition against the Mussulmans; but, unfortunately, they were only sufficiently seconded by the intelligent zeal of the papacy.

In the answer of Nicholas IV. to the last letter of Argoun, the pontiff appears to reckon but little on the assistance of the King of England, while he brings forward the strongest motives to attract the Mongol prince towards Christianity. This important conquest, if it could have been effected, would have been quite equal in value to that of Palestine and the conversion of the Mongols following the crusades, and would have been the most important and happiest result of these expeditions, and of the connexions to which they had given birth. The Mongols, it is true, were not a people easy to convert; always wavering between Christianity and Mahommedanism, they sought to conciliate the partisans of both religions in the countries subject to them; a complete and decisive alliance could alone put an end to this fluctuation; but the Christian princes did not sufficiently understand this, and history will have to record, to the great honour of the papacy, that the sovereign pontiffs were more intelligent, more active, and

more persevering than the kings in this great struggle between the West and the East. The conversion of the Mongol princes was, in their opinion, an event of immense magnitude, as it respected civilisation and the Christian faith. Although Jesus Christ has said that "his kingdom is not of this world," nevertheless, good policy, and the prosperity of nations, must always harmonise with the interests of religion. Nations are great and happy only when the individuals who compose them are anxious to save their souls for eternity. Thus, those numerous letters which the Pope sent into the heart of Asia, and whose only aim seems to have been the baptism of a few barbarian princes, might have tended to the triumph of Christian civilisation throughout the world.

Nicholas IV. wrote by Zagan on his return, not only to Argoun, to press him earnestly to embrace the Christian religion, but also to his son Kharbendé, who had been baptized by the name of Nicholas, to congratulate him on his conversion, and to give him wise and useful counsel. There were also letters for the two brothers, Sarou and Cassian, for the Mongol general Tagatchar, and for the queens Anichoamin and Dathanikan. This correspondence has been preserved to us in the pontifical annals; but we shall only quote the letter to the son of Argoun, and this merely because it contains passages which prove that the Church, like a tender mother, has always been (whatever some may say) gentle and tolerant to her children.

"To our dear and noble son Nicholas, son of Argoun, the illustrious king of the Tartars, health and the apostolic benediction.

"Our heart has glowed with joy in the Lord, from whom flows the abundance of all celestial gifts, because we have learned, by credible testimony, that you have been illuminated by a ray of the divine light. Prepared by the blessings of grace, you have hastened with laudable zeal to the

source of the waters of baptism. This news has been to us the more agreeable and happy, as we bear you the more sincerely in the bowels of our charity, and the more warmly desire the increase of your glory and your salvation. We beseech your nobleness, and exhort you, in the name of the Son of God, to devote yourself with zeal and vigilance, as a child of benediction, to the practice of those good works and those virtues by which the kingdom of heaven is to be gained. Study and observe, with courage and sincerity, the Christian faith, whose glorious banner you have unfurled. Men, led on by your salutary example, will be induced to embrace the same faith; and you yourself, after the course of this life, which has in it nothing certain or lasting, will receive the reward of that eternal blessedness which God has reserved for His elect. Further, we recommend and advise you affectionately to make no change in your habits, your garments, or your food, lest it might become amongst your people a subject of dissension or scandal. Continue the same manner of living which you practised before the reception of baptism; and, in order that the articles of your faith may be more familiar to you, we send you a copy of them, which you will find added hereunto. It begins thus, 'We believe in the holy Trinity,' &c. Receive with kindness, out of respect for us and the holy see, our dear sons the brothers William de Cheri, our penitentiary, and Matthew de Thieti, professor of Theology, whom we send into your country for the salvation of your nation. Treat them with favour, and in the business which has been entrusted to them, grant them, if they shall ask it, advice, assistance, and protection."*

At the moment, however, when the Pope was sending by two new ambassadors, these numerous letters to Tartary, Argoun was breathing his last.† Providence, says a contemporary author, had allowed that column to fall, upon which

* Odor. Raynald, ann. 1291, p. 443. Wadding, tom. v. p. 256.
† Bar-Hebræus, p. 512.

every hope of the propagation of the faith in Upper Asia seemed to rest. It is certain that his death overwhelmed with regret and sadness all who were interested in the progress of Christianity. The conversion of Argoun had been relied upon; and only a favourable opportunity was waited for, to see him publicly take his place amongst the worshippers of Jesus Christ. But this prince was of too undecided a character to defy the opinion of the numerous Mussulmans at his court. Before declaring himself, he wished to see their power insensibly diminish; he had in the first place begun by depriving them of their dignities and employments, and he hoped that their influence would be completely destroyed, by the projected expedition into Syria and Palestine. Argoun had also repeatedly said, that he would be baptized at Jerusalem only. It is certain, nevertheless, that he favoured religion and the missionaries, during the whole course of his life; and the numerous embassies which he sent to Rome, France, England, and Spain, are a proof of his sympathy with the Christians.

Argoun's successor was his brother, Gaïkhatou, who did not at all resemble him. He was said to lean towards Mahommedanism, and the historians of the time represent him as a man entirely plunged in debauchery and drunkenness; but Hayton, who attributes to him every vice, says that he had no religion at all.* After a disgraceful reign of five years, he was assassinated by the grandees of his palace. He was succeeded by Baïdou, a mild and humane prince, and a great friend to the Christians; but perhaps not sufficiently prudent in political matters. He built a great number of churches, and forbade the preaching of Islamism to the Tartars; and these measures alienated from him the hearts of the Mussulmans, who now cast their eyes upon Gazan, the son of Argoun, and offered him the throne, on condition of his renouncing the Christianity which he had lately embraced. Gazan, who had

* "Nullam habebat legem vel fidem."— Hist. Orient. cap. xxxix.

little faith and much ambition, lent himself to their intrigues, and became their proselyte, in order to gain possession of the crown; and having thus attained to power, he showed himself at first a bitter enemy to the Christians. In 1296 he overwhelmed them with calamities, and raised a terrible persecution against them; those of Armenia alone were exempt from ill-treatment; in all other countries, he overthrew all that pertained to religion. The churches were everywhere pulled down, and all objects in use for religious worship were given up to the ridicule and contempt of the infidels. In the city of Bagdad every Christian who dared to appear in public was sure to be loaded with insults and outrages. The bodies of the Nestorian patriarchs, Machika and Denha, which were buried in the temple called Duidari, were exhumed, and their limbs cast out on the public road to the profanation of the multitude. Contemporary authors cannot relate, without horror, the atrocities which were committed at that time against the Christians, in the cities of Arbela, Tauris, Mosoul, and Bagdad. The persecution lasted till 1298, when the Christians were on a sudden restored to tranquillity.

Gazan had married a daughter of the King of Armenia, a Christian princess, distinguished, it is said, by great piety and extraordinary beauty. She gave birth, however, to a child repulsively ugly and deformed, "more like a little monster than a human being." Gazan tenderly loved his wife, but was ashamed and shocked at having a son so hideous; and his courtiers (most of them Mussulmans) thought they had now found a favourable opportunity of ruining the princess, who, as a devout Christian, and full of zeal for the propagation of her faith, was highly objectionable to them. They held a council, therefore, and declared that the child just born must necessarily be the offspring of adultery; and both mother and child were consequently condemned to be burned alive. The pile was prepared, and the victims led to torture, in the midst of an immense concourse of people, amongst

whom very contradictory feelings were manifested; for this tragic event, which was the triumph of the Mussulmans, had plunged the Christians into sorrow and dejection. The pile being on fire, crackled and blazed in all directions, awaiting its prey, when the unfortunate princess of Armenia, with tears, besought her royal spouse to grant her one moment to fulfil the last duties of her religion, and to procure the grace of baptism for her poor child, ere she should die with him in the midst of the flames. Gazan, moved with compassion, granted his wife the favour she implored; a minister of the Christian religion presented himself, heard the confession of the mother, and after having fortified her by the reception of the holy *viaticum*, administered the sacrament of baptism to the child. But scarcely had the holy water destined to regenerate the soul of that unfortunate creature flowed over his forehead, when a sudden and marvellous change took place in the sight of the multitude, who were anxiously awaiting the end of this frightful drama.

God had given to the waters of baptism the power of embellishing the body, at the same time that it washed away the original stains from the soul. The child had suddenly become ravishingly beautiful; the numerous witnesses of the miracle uttered cries of admiration, and Gazan, convinced of the virtue of his wife, led her back in triumph to his palace. From that time, he also determined to worship that God who had wrought such marvels, and he made a public profession of Christianity, along with a considerable number of his subjects.

The circumstances of this event are related by St. Antoninus,* as he received them from a Florentine who, after hav-

* Chron., p. 3. tit. 20. cap. viii. fol. 82. We find in the "Chronicle of St. Denis" (chap. xxv.) the following words:—An cest an (1266) le roi des Tartarins Cassahan, qui grant Cham estoit appellé, merveilleusement et par miracle, avec grant multitude de ses gens, fut chrestienné et converty par la fille du roi d'Armenie, qui estoit chretienne laquelle il avoit espousée."

lived a long time amongst the Tartars, had been deputed to go into Europe, and carry this interesting news to the sovereign pontiff and the Christian princes. Mosheim also relates the same fact,* but does not appear to put any great faith in it. "Is it not possible," says he, "that a beautiful child may have been substituted for that monstrous being, and made to pass for the son of Gazan?" Yes, assuredly the thing is very possible, but a miracle is still more so; we have not, like Mosheim, an insuperable objection to miracles, and it is even difficult for us to comprehend the views of those who always prefer granting to the cunning of men what they refuse to the omnipotence of God.

Gazan having become a Christian, resolutely adopted a policy more conformable to his new sentiments. He joined his father-in-law, the King of Armenia, in attacking the Sultan of Egypt, Malek-Naser; in which expedition, he realised, but a little too late, the projects concerning which his predecessors had so many times negotiated with the Christian kings, before the total destruction of the power of the Crusaders. He took Damascus, and his troops ravaged all Syria. Koutlouk, one of his generals, advanced from the direction of Antioch, and in pursuance of the commands of his master, invoked the Christians of Cyprus to his aid. Sire Amauri, the brother of the King of Cyprus, was chosen to conduct this expedition, and came to Autarados, with the Grand Masters of the Templars and Hospitallers. But just as they were on the point of joining the Mongols, the latter, learning that Gazan was dangerously ill, retired in haste. The King of Armenia returned to his dominions, and the Franks went back to Cyprus, without having derived any advantage from their preparations.

What there was favourable to the cause of the Christians in these events, had the effect of bringing the news of them quickly to Europe.

* Hist. Tart., &c., p. 86.

"Then it happened," says a contemporary chronicler, "that an innumerable and marvellous host was assembled against the Saracens, and the seneschal of all this host was the Christian King of Armenia. And he first led them towards Aleppo, and after that to Camel, and gained the victory, though not without great slaughter and loss of his people. And then, when he had collected his host again, and refreshed them, and recovered his strength, he followed the Saracens towards Damascus, where the Soldan was, with a great host that he had brought there. Then between this King of the Tartars, the Soldan, and the Saracens, there was a wonderful, great, and fierce battle, and more than 100,000 Saracens were slain. The Holy Land was then in the hands of the Tartars, and subject to them; and the Christians, with great joy and exultation, kept the Feast of Easter to the glory of God in Jerusalem."*

The war between Gazan and the Sultan of Egypt was prolonged for several years with various success. The King of Armenia, his faithful vassal, or, as the chroniclers say, seneschal of all his host, came with 40,000 vassals to ravage Syria, and took several towns, and it was in consequence of these events, that the idea of invoking the aid of the Crusaders recurred to Gazan, and that he sent ambassadors to the West to solicit it. His messengers came to Paris, and renewed to the King of France their former proposals of alliance; they then went to England, and endeavoured to come to an understanding with Edward I.

But while Gazan was thus offering his alliance to the sovereigns of the West, the circumstances that might have rendered it valuable to them were considerably altered. A great victory gained by the Mussulmans had obliged the Mongols and the King of Armenia to retire across the Euphrates,—a misfortune which is said to have afflicted Gazan so much, as to cause the malady of which he died in the year 1302.

* Chron. de Saint-Denis, chap. xxv.

At the same epoch, there died also at Pekin the great Kublai-Khan, Emperor of the Chinese and Oriental Tartars. Kublai was indisputably the sovereign of the most enormous empire that the annals of the world have ever made known: it comprehended the whole of China, Corea, Thibet, Tonquin, and Cochin China, a great part of India beyond the Ganges many islands of the Indian Ocean; and the whole north of the continent of Asia, from the Pacific to the Dnieper. Persia, also, was a feudatory of his throne; its sovereigns, the successors of Houlagou, receiving their investiture from the Emperor of China, and as the dominions of these great vassals extended to the Mediterranean and the frontiers of the Greek Empire, it may be said that the whole of Asia was subject to the laws of the great Khan, who had chosen Pekin as the central seat of his government. What was the empire of Alexander the Great, or of the Romans, or even of Tchinguiz-Khan, compared with that of Kublai? And yet this astonishing potentate is scarcely known at all among us, and our most learned histories hardly say a word about him!

This reign of Kublai offers to our observation one remarkable phenomenon. We see this powerful sovereign ruling at once over the most civilised nations of the East, and over those who had scarcely issued from barbarism; with one hand encouraging the arts of peace, and with the other exciting ardour for martial enterprises; softening nations already vanquished, and unchaining against others the furies of war.

Kublai had received a Chinese education; he appreciated the advantages of civilisation; he admired the institutions of China, and protected literature and the sciences. He had some of the best Chinese books translated into the Mongol language, and founded schools for the young people of his own country, and gave much encouragement to their studies. He received with favour learned and literary men of every country and religion, granting them many privileges, and ex

empting them from taxes and tributes. It was he who established the college of *Han-lin*, the first academical institution of China. He spread the taste for mathematics, and, with the assistance of the Arabs, laboured in the construction of a new system of astronomy, greatly superior to any that the Chinese had hitherto been acquainted with. He afforded, also, great encouragement to agriculture, industry, and commerce; he had numerous canals dug in all the provinces of China, and he threw open the sea-ports to all foreigners. But the task of civilising the Tartars proved beyond the power even of Kublai. The intercourse of these ignorant and warlike tribes with a peaceful and cultivated nation, never effected any fusion between them; and whilst the Tartars retained their rude, turbulent, and vagabond habits, the Chinese submitted patiently to their conquest, and quietly devoted themselves to commerce and industry, arts and letters.

The religious sentiment was the only one that could have combined elements so discordant, and upon this point the Chinese and Mongols seemed to differ irreconcileably. When Kublai-Khan had achieved the conquest of China, he found three religious systems acclimated in it, and at that time engaged in bitter hostilities against one another; though, since then, having all fallen into the abyss of scepticism, they have become reconciled, and given each other the kiss of peace.

The first and most ancient of these faiths is that called *Jou-Khiao*, the Doctrine of the Lettered, of which Confucius is regarded as the reformer and patriarch. It is based upon a philosophical pantheism, which has been variously interpreted at various epochs. It is believed that at a remote period, the existence of an omnipotent God, a requiter of human actions, was not excluded from it, and various passages from Confucius give room to suppose that the sage himself held such a doctrine; but the little care he took to inculcate it on his disciples, the vague meaning of the expressions he

employed, and the resolution he had apparently taken to found his system of morals and justice merely upon the principles of love of order, and of a certain not very well defined "conformity with the designs of Heaven," and the progress of nature, have allowed the philosophers who have succeeded him to go entirely astray, and many of them had, even in th thirteenth century, fallen into a true Spinozism; and whil still appealing to the authority of their master, taught a materialist doctrine that has since degenerated into atheism.

Confucius, himself, is never religious in his writings; he contents himself with recommending in general the observance of ancient precepts, of filial piety, and fraternal affection, and of maintaining a course of conduct "conformable to the laws of Heaven, which must always be in harmony with human actions."*

In reality the religion, or rather the doctrine of the disciples of Confucius, is Positivism. They care nothing about the origin, the creation, or the end of the world, and very little about long philosophical lucubrations. They confine their cares wholly to this life; they ask of science and letters only what is needful to enable them to go through their various occupations; of great principles only their practical consequences; and of morality, only what is political and utilitarian. They are, in fact, what many people in Europe are now seeking to become. They put all speculative questions aside, to attach themselves exclusively to the positive; their religion is but a kind of material civilisation, and their philosophy the art of living in peace, of obeying and commanding. The "Religion of the Lettered" has neither altars, images, nor priests; the mandarins are its sole ministers, and when on some solemn occasions it is thought desirable to offer some homage to Heaven, it is they who officiate.

* We have already, in the "Chinese Empire," spoken of the three religions officially admitted into China; but it seemed that the subject ought to find a place in the present work.

Whatever is most in earnest, and least vague in this religion of the lettered, has been absorbed by the worship of Confucius himself. His tablet is placed in all the schools, and masters and pupils are required to prostrate themselves before his venerated name at the commencement and end of the lessons; and his statue is to be found in all the academies, in the places where the learned assemble, and where literary examinations are undergone. All the towns in China have temples raised to his honour, and more than three hundred millions of men proclaim him with one voice the saint *par excellence*. Never has it been given to any mortal to exercise for so many ages, such an empire over his fellow-creatures, or to receive from them homage so like actual worship; although every one knows perfectly well that Confucius was simply a man who lived in the principality of Lou, two centuries before the Christian era. The annals of the human race present no more extraordinary fact than of this civil homage and religious adoration, rendered by an immense nation, for twenty-four centuries to a simple citizen. The descendants of Confucius too, who still exist in great numbers, participate in the extraordinary honours rendered by the Chinese to their glorious ancestor. They constitute, in fact, the only hereditary nobility of the empire, and enjoy certain privileges, reserved for them alone.

The second religion of China is regarded by its disciples as the primitive one of its most ancient inhabitants. It has numerous analogies with the preceding; but the individual existence of genii and demons is recognized in it, independently of the parts of nature over which they preside. The priests and priestesses of this worship are devoted to celibacy, and practise magic, astrology, necromancy, and a thousand absurdities. They are called Tao-ssé, or Doctors of Reason, because their fundamental dogma taught by the renowned Lao-tze, is that of a primordial reason, which has created the

world. This doctrine is contained in a work pompously entitled, the "Book of the Way, and of Virtue."*

This Lao-tze was in frequent communication with Confucius, but it is difficult to know what was the opinion of the head of the Religion of the Lettered concerning the doctrine of the patriarch of the Doctors of Reason. One day he went to pay him a visit, and when he came back to his disciples, remained three days without speaking a word. Tseu-Kong was surprised at this silence, and asked its cause.

"When," said Confucius, "I see a man making use of his thoughts to escape from me like a bird who flies, I arrange mine like a bow armed with its arrow to pierce him, and I never fail to reach him and master him. When I see a man making use of his thoughts to escape from me like an agile stag, I arrange mine like a hunting dog to pursue him, and I never fail to overtake and seize him. When a man makes use of his thoughts to slip away from me like a fish into the deep, I arrange mine as the fisherman does the hook, and I never fail to get him into my power. But as to the dragon that rises into the clouds and soars into the air, I cannot pursue him. This day I have seen Lao-tze, and he is like the dragon. At his voice my mouth remained wide open, and I was not able to shut it; my tongue came out with astonishment, and I have never been able to draw it back again! My soul was plunged into perplexity, and has not been able to recover its former tranquillity."

Whatever may be said of the philosophical ideas of Lao-tze, his disciples have never enjoyed great popularity, and the superstitions to which they give way are so extravagant, that the most ignorant make them the object of their sarcasms. They have acquired celebrity chiefly by their pretended secret of an elixir of immortality, a secret which has brought them into great favour with some famous emperors.

* Tao-te-King. M. Stanislas Julien has given a translation of it, which, like all his works, is of rare excellence.

The Chinese annals are full of the disputes and quarrels of the Lao-tze with the disciples of Confucius, who have employed the weapons of ridicule against them with the greatest success—and have never failed to turn the laugh against both them and the Bonzes, the priests of Buddhism, which is the third religion of China.

Towards the middle of the first century of our era, the emperors of the Han dynasty officially admitted into the empire the Buddhism of India; and this worship, which admits of material representations of the Divinity, spread rapidly among the Chinese, who called it the religion of *Fo*—an imperfect transcription of the name of Buddha. This is a very ancient generic word, with a double root in Sanscrit—one part signifying being, and the other wisdom or superior intelligence. It is the name employed to designate the Supreme Being—the Omnipotent God; and it is also sometimes extended to those who worship him, and seek to raise themselves towards him by contemplation and sanctity. The Buddhists generally use it for a real historical personage who became celebrated throughout Asia, and who is regarded as the founder of the institutions and doctrine comprised under the general denomination of Buddhism. In the eyes of the Buddhists this personage is sometimes a man and sometimes a god, or rather both one and the other—a divine incarnation—a man-god—who came into the world to enlighten men, to redeem them, and indicate to them the way of safety. This idea of redemption by a divine incarnation, is so general and popular amongst the Buddhists, that during our travels in Upper Asia we everywhere found it expressed in a neat formula. If we addressed to a Mongol or a Thibetan the question "Who is Buddha?" he would immediately reply, "The Saviour of men." The miraculous birth of Buddha, his life and his instructions, contain a great number of the moral and dogmatic truths professed in Christianity, and which we need not be surprised to find thus in other religions, since these truths are traditional,

and have always been the property of the whole human race. There must be amongst a pagan people more or less of Christian truth, as they have been more or less faithful in preserving the deposit of primitive tradition.

By the concordance of the Indian, Chinese, Thibetan, Mongol, and Cingalese books, the birth of Buddha may be placed as far back as about the year 960 B.C. He was of the house of Chakia, which reigned in India over the powerful empire of Mogadha, in the southern Bahar; and the legend concerning him is full of the most extravagant prodigies and wonders. After many years passed in solitude and contemplation, he went to Benares, where he assumed the name of *Chakia-Mouni*, the Penitent of Chakia; and having assembled around him a multitude of auditors of all classes, he unfolded his doctrines. His teachings are contained in a collection of a hundred and eight large volumes, known under the generic name of *Gandjour*, or Verbal Instructions; and turning exclusively on the metaphysics of creation, and the frail and perishable nature of man. This monumental work is found in all the libraries of the great Buddhist convents.

Chakia-Mouni experienced in his apostleship a lively opposition from the priests attached to the more ancient creeds of India; but, after a solemn discussion with them, he triumphed over all his adversaries, and their chief prostrated himself before him, and confessed himself conquered.

Chakia-Mouni then revised the fundamental principles of morality, and the Decalogue. The moral principles he reduced to four:—1st. The force of mercy, established on an immovable basis. 2nd. An aversion to all cruelty. 3rd. A boundless compassion towards all creatures. 4th. A conscience inflexible in its observance of law. Then follows the Decalogue, or ten special prescriptions and prohibitions:—1st. Not to kill. 2nd. Not to steal. 3rd. To be chaste. 4th. Not to bear false witness. 5th. Not to lie. 6th. Not to swear. 7th. To avoid impure words. 8th. To be disinterested. 9th. Not to

avenge one's-self. 10th. Not to be superstitious. This last prohibition is a very remarkable one, and one which certainly the modern Buddhists do not observe very strictly.

Chakia-Mouni declared that these precepts and rules of human action, had been revealed to him after the four great trials to which he had subjected himself, when he first devoted himself to the state of sanctity; and, according to the legend, this code of morals was beginning to be generally diffused in Asia, when Buddha, then twenty-four years of age, quitted the earth, putting off his material envelope to be re-absorbed into the universal soul, which is himself. Before bidding farewell to his disciples, he foretold that his doctrine would reign on the earth for five thousand years; and that at the end of that time another Buddha would appear, a man-god, predestined twelve centuries before, to be the teacher of the human race. "From this epoch," he added, "my religion will be a prey to persecution; my disciples will be obliged to quit India to retire to the lofty summits of Thibet; and this table-land from which the observer overlooks the world, will become the sanctuary and the metropolis of the true faith."

The dominant character of Buddhism is a spirit of mildness, equality, and fraternity, which contrasts strongly with the hardness and arrogance of Brahminism. Chakia-Mouni and his disciples in the first place endeavored to communicate to all the world the truths which were before the exclusive property of the privileged classes. The Brahmin idea of perfection was of an egotistical character; religion was for them only, and they devoted themselves to painful penances, in order to share hereafter in the abode of Brahma.

The devotion of the Buddhist ascetic was more disinterested; not aspiring to elevate himself only, he practised virtue and applied himself to perfection, to make other men share in its benefits; and by the institution of an order of religious mendicants, which increased to an immense extent, he attracted toward him, and restored to society, the poor and

unfortunate. It was, indeed, precisely because he received among his disciples miserable creatures who were outcasts from the respectable classes of India, that he became an object of mockery to the Brahmins. But he merely replied to their taunts, "My law is a law of mercy for all."

One day the Brahmins were scandalised to see him receive a girl of the inferior caste of the Tchandala as a nun; but Chakia said, "There is not between a Brahmin and a person of any other caste the difference that there is between gold and a stone, between light and darkness. The Brahmin did not issue from the ether or the wind, nor did he cleave the earth and come forth like the fire from the Arani wood. The Brahmin was born of a woman, just like the Tchandala. Where then is the cause that should render one noble and another vile? The Brahmin himself, when he is dead, is abandoned like a vile and impure thing, as a man of any other caste is. Where then is the difference?"*

The religious systems of Brahminism and Buddhism resemble each other, nevertheless, in many particulars; and the fierce persecutions the Buddhists have experienced are not so much to be attributed to the divergence of their opinions upon doctrinal points, as to their admission of all men, without distinction of caste, to the civil and sacerdotal functions, and to the rewards of a future state.

A reformer who proclaimed the equality of men in this world and the next, could not but excite the hostility of the adherents of a system depending so essentially as Brahminism does on a hierarchy of castes; and the persecutions of the Buddhists were long and violent. According to their own accounts, the number of victims who perished would be quite incalculable; but at length, towards the sixth century of our era, Brahminism obtained a decisive victory over the partizans of the new religion; and the latter being driven from

* Eugene Burnhoff, "Introduction à l'Histoire de Boudhisme," vol. i.

Hindostan, and forced to cross the Himmalaya in great numbers, spread over Thibet, Bucharia, Mongolia and China, the Birman Empire and Japan, and also over the Island of Ceylon. So actively, indeed, has propagandism been carried on in those countries, that Buddhism at present boasts a greater number of disciples than any other form of religious faith.

CHAPTER IX.

Kublai-Khan favours the Christians.—He sends the Venetian Brothers Polo to the Sovereign Pontiff.—The two Venetians return to China accompanied by young Marco Polo.—Their Journey.—Residence of Marco Polo in China.—His return to Venice.—The Narrative of Marco Polo.—His account of Christianity in China.—The Apostleship of John of Monte Corvino.—His Letters to the Monks of his Order.—Persecutions raised against him.—Clement V. sends seven Bishops to China.—They consecrate Monte Corvino Archbishop of Pekin.—An Armenian Lady builds a Church at Han-tcheou-fou.—Letter of André de Perhouse.—Numerous Missionaries in China—Oderic de Frioul.—His journey from the Indies to China with the Bones of four Martyrs.—His Apostleship in China—in Tartary—in Thibet.—His return to Pisa.—Account of his Death.

When Kublai Khan found Buddhism so extensively diffused among the population of his vast empire, he deemed it expedient to adopt it himself, and to grant an especial protection of the Lamas. His zeal, however, for the religion of Buddha did not prevent him from respecting and spreading the faith of the Christians, Mahometans, and Jews. On the days of Christian festivals, he had them brought into his presence, and devoutly kissed the book of the Gospels, after having perfumed it with incense. He said that there were four great prophets revered by all nations, Jesus Christ, Mahomet, Moses, Chakia-Mouni; and that he held them all in equal honor, and equally invoked their celestial assistance.

This amalgamation of all beliefs was an arrangement perfectly agreeable to the customs of Tchinguiz-Khan, and to the habits of the greater part of the Chinese emperors. Not content, however, with affording refuge and protection to all modes of worship and faith, Kublai-Khan, in a very different spirit from that of most of the sovereigns of the Mantchoo dynasty, received with kindness, in all parts of his vast empire, all strangers, whether from Europe or Asia; and among the travellers thus attracted to China in the thirteenth century, the most celebrated is undoubtedly Marco Polo, whose curious history contains many details descriptive of the state of Christianity in the far East.

Commerce, the grand source of the prosperity of the Venetians, had, about the year 1250, attracted Nicolo and Matteo Polo to Constantinople, and in 1256, they both made their way to the dominions of the Khan of Tartary, who was then encamped on the shores of the Volga. The war, however, which had broken out among these nomadic people, compelled them both to make a precipitate retreat from the States of Barka, where they had been staying, and to pass on to Bokhara on the south-eastern shores of the Caspian Sea. They carried on their trading transactions for three years in these districts, studying meanwhile the language and manners of the Tartars; and they finally joined an embassy bound for China, but it took them more than a year to get to Khanbalik (Pekin) where the Emperor Kublai resided. This sovereign, with his usual courtesy towards strangers, treated them with great distinction. He questioned them much concerning the princes who were reigning in Europe, as well as the manners and customs of the different nations they had visited, and spoke to them with great interest about the sovereign pontiff, the Church of Rome, and Christians generally.*

* "And he afterwards questioned them about the Pope, the general arrangements of the Romish church, and the customs of the Latins."—*Journey of Marco Polo*, published by the Geographical Society, chap. vii. p. 5.

The emperor's conversation with the two Venetian brothers soon bore fruit, for Kublai called a council of the first dignitaries of his empire, and imparted to them his project of sending envoys to the Pope of the Christians.

The members of the council responded unanimously that the idea was worthy of being put into execution, and the khan had Nicolo and Matteo Polo at once called before him, invested them with the rank of ambassadors, and gave orders for the preparation of the letters which they were to take to the Pope. At their departure, Kublai particularly impressed upon the Venetians the importance of the request which he had addressed to the sovereign Pontiff, for him to despatch a hundred men, remarkable for their wisdom and scientific attainments, "in order," he said, "that they may show idolaters generally, and to my subjects, that their present doctrine is a diabolical invention, and point out to them the superiority of Christianity." These words are not a little surprising, proceeding from a sovereign devoted to the superstitions of the Lamas; but what is more surprising still is, that he especially directed his ambassadors to bring him some of the oil burning before the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem.* All these facts prove that Christianity was widely spread in China; and that if the great khan did not openly profess it, he nevertheless held it in great esteem and veneration.

Nicolo and Matteo Polo, who had entered the city of Pekin as merchants, quitted it in the capacity of ambassadors from the great Khan of Tartary to the sovereign pontiff. A golden tablet stamped with the imperial seal, which Kublai had given them, served at once to mark their rank throughout the empire, and to obtain for them the assistance and protection they required. But though this golden tablet preserved them from pillage and massacre, it could not accelerate their journey, and it was not until they had undergone the fatigue of travelling for three years, that they arrived at Acre, which town

* Journey of Marco Polo, chap. viii. p. 6.

they reached in the month of April, 1270. They were on the point of starting thence for Rome, when they heard of the recent death of Clement IV.; and though the legate apostolic had advised them to remain in the East until the election of the new pontiff, they preferred returning to their native country.

Their departure from Venice, whence they had originally started for the East, had only preceded the birth of Marco Polo by a few months; and when, after an absence of twenty years, they returned to their family, this young Venetian, who had lost his mother when in the cradle, saw his father for the first time. The accounts of the wonderful things Nicolo and Matteo had seen in Asia, so inflamed the imagination of young Marco, that he conceived a vehement desire to travel himself, and earnestly entreated his relations to take him with them when they should return to Tartary. Two years slipped by without the election of a successor to Clement IV.; and then the Venetians, finding this delay so much greater than they had anticipated, determined upon returning to the East, and taking Marco the son of Nicolo Polo with them. They set out first for Jerusalem, in order to obtain, in accordance with the directions Kublai had given them, a portion of the oil burning before the Holy Sepulchre, and then proceeded again to Acre to see the legate apostolic, who approved of their determination, and gave them letters to the khan, explaining that the vacancy of the Holy See had caused their delay.

They had just commenced their journey, and were proceeding by easy stages, when they were once more stopped by receiving from an estafette, the information that the legate apostolic of Egypt himself had been called to the pontifical throne, which he had ascended under the name of Gregory X. He desired the Venetian ambassadors to proceed to Lyons, where he was going to call a general council, and on their joyfully repairing thither, he received them with affection, overwhelmed them with honours, and attached to their embassy

two monks of the order of St. Dominic, William of Tripoli, and Nicolas de Vicenza.

Just at the period when the embassy entered Armenia, the Bibar troops had invaded the country, and spread murder and desolation throughout it.* The two Dominican missionaries who had, several times during their journey, almost sunk beneath the fatigue they had to endure, were now reduced to such a state of exhaustion, that they thought it impossible to proceed further; and as they felt convinced that they would be unable to pass safely through a country infested by Egyptian soldiers, the mortal enemies of the monks, they retraced their steps, and confided the despatches, with which they had been entrusted, to the Venetians.

After spending three years and a half on the journey, the Polo family at last arrived in China, at the court of which country, they were received with the most lively manifestations of satisfaction, and the utmost honour. The emperor praised the zeal and fidelity of his ambassadors, made them give him a minute account of the affairs of the Christians, and the sovereign pontiff; read with interest all the letters that were addressed to him, and exhibited the greatest delight on seeing the holy oil which he had asked for,† giving orders to his servants to have it preserved with the utmost veneration. He then noticed young Marco, and asked who he was. "Sire," replied Nicolo Polo, "he is my son and your servant."‡ "He is welcome," said Kublai.

He then gave orders for the preparation of a magnificent banquet, during which, the three poor Venetians had, no doubt, to submit to the most extraordinary questioning about the men and things of the West, since the Tartars, whose curiosity

* "Et quant les deus frèrs Prescaor virent ce, il ont grant dotance d'aler plus navat. Adouc distrent que il ne iront mie."—*Marco Polo*, chap. xiii. p. 9.

† "Puis il bailent le sanct oleo de cui il fist grant joie, et le tient mout chier . . . —*Voyage de Marco Pole*, p. 10.

‡ "Sire, fait meser Nicolao, il est mon filz et vostre home. Bien soit il venu, fait le grant Can."—*Ibid.* p. 11.

is insatiable, never hesitate in the slightest degree in questioning strangers. People who have travelled much are themselves, frequently enough, over eager to tell stories about their travels; but the pitiless fury of these questioners is something beyond conception.

Marco Polo was allowed to take up his abode at court. He applied himself with ardour to the study of the Tartar and four other languages; and his progress was so rapid, that in a very short time he was able to read and write with fluency in the Eastern tongues. He fell in also, so easily, with the manners and customs of the people among whom he lived, that he was frequently supposed to be a native of the country, differing from them only in those qualities of mind which will always give the European a superiority over the Oriental. The emperor having soon remarked the wisdom and prudence of the young man, entrusted him with an important mission into a distant country; and Marco Polo on his return, did not content himself like other ambassadors, with giving the bare official account of the affairs that had been confided to him, but related so many curious and interesting details as to the habits of the people he had visited, that the emperor became greatly interested in his narration. The reputation of the young Venetian increased rapidly from this time, and he soon gained a position at court, which commanded for him the esteem and respect of all the great men of the empire. As his age increased, his enlarged experience, his activity of mind, and affable manners, gained for him a favour that was always justified by his zeal and fidelity, and the affairs of the empire and the most important embassies occupied the best years of his life. Entrusted for three years with the government of a province, he became acquainted with all the springs of the administration, and the resource of the empire; and it was to his industry, that Kublai owed the surrender of a place, that he had been vainly besieging for years, in the South of China, since by inventing some engines of war for throwing stones

of an enormous size, he compelled the frightened inhabitants, who saw all their principal edifices falling in ruins, to open their gates to the Tartars.

After remaining seventeen years in China, the Venetians, who had never intended to leave their native country for ever, began to think of undertaking once more the long and perilous journey by which they could alone reach it. The emperor when he heard of this was very much distressed, and neglected no means by which to turn them from their resolution, and induce them to remain permanently with him; but when he found how ardent was their longing to see their native land again, he generously agreed to their departure, and gave such orders as would enable them to travel with honour and convenience. He sent to each of them a golden tablet stamped with the imperial seal, which would ensure them a safe conduct throughout the whole extent of his empire; he invested them with the rank of ambassadors, giving them letters for the Pope, and the kings of France and Spain; and on hearing that they must necessarily cross the China Sea, and the Straits of Sunda, as far as India, he placed fourteen large vessels at their disposal, each having four masts, by means of which they could, weather permitting, spread twelve sails.* This journey by sea and land lasted for three years and a half; but finally, after having escaped many dangers, and gone through numerous adventures, they re-appeared in Europe in the year 1295, when the interest of the Western World was for the first time drawn towards those countries which they had explored more thoroughly than any other Europeans.

Marco Polo, however, was not long destined to remain in the quiet enjoyment of the rest he had hoped for; for only a few months after his return, a war broke out between Venice and Genoa, and the ex-ambassador of Kublai-Khan had the honour of serving on board the Venetian fleet, and of exposing

* "Puis le grant Kan fist epparoiller quartorze nés, lesquels avoit chascune quatre arbres, et maintes foies aloient à douze voiles."— *Voyage de Marco Polo*, p. 14.

his life in the defence of the country which he had just rendered illustrious by his Asiatic discoveries. At the battle of Curzola, where the Venetians were defeated, Marco Polo commanded a galley holding a position in the front rank, and falling at his post severely wounded, he was captured by the enemy, and taken as a prisoner of war to Genoa.

His captivity lasted for four years, but it was this misfortune that in reality put the finishing stroke to his celebrity. The Genoese received with admiration and avidity the accounts of his visits to countries which had formerly been almost unknown. No account had as yet been published; and though all the materials were at Venice, he had them brought to him, put them in order, and had a complete narrative of his travels written under his own eye by a citizen of Pisa, who shared his captivity.* His work became very widely known, the copies of it were multiplied, abridgments and translations were published, and it circulated everywhere; it was, in fact, to European readers, like the announcement of a new world—like a revelation of the manners and habits of a new race. Some of the regions of Central Asia had, indeed, been previously traversed by many others; Ascelin, Plano-Carpini, Rubruk, Oderic de Friuli, Sir John Mandeville, were all of them contemporaries of Marco Polo; but they had seen nothing but numerous deserts on their way to the court of Kara-Koroum; they had never remained long in any part, they had not had either the ability or the leisure to observe the details of the countries through which they journeyed. They saw nothing, and what indeed could they have seen? A Tartar population continually under arms, having no fixed habitation, occupying only poor and devastated countries, offered no other spectacle than themselves. The only things, consequently, that the travellers could speak of in their narratives, were the manners and customs of the warlike Mon-

* Recueil de Voyages, &c., publié par la Société de Géographie, vol. i., Introduction, p. xlv.

gols. They had never encountered when on their journeys any objects of interest relating to art, industry, commerce, or agriculture. They had, it is true, occasionally visited some of the towns, but these were separated from one another by immense deserts. The security of the travellers diminished in proportion to their distance from these enclosed places, since the Tartar families who had kept to their wandering mode of life traversed the steppes in all directions, chasing the wild animals in the woods, and watching for the passage of travellers that they might plunder them. It became necessary to organise complete caravans, and to wait in the large towns till a sufficient number of travellers could be got together to ensure safety during the journey. Regular periods for departure were named, but unavoidable accidents would often defer them, and the journeys were thus indefinitely delayed.

Heavy falls of snow, the overflowing of rivers, deep sands and marshes, would sometimes interrupt the communications. Here, the print of a few footsteps would alone show the route that had to be followed; at other places the presence of a man was alone apparent by the destruction of forests, or the ruins of former habitations. When the rivers had returned to their beds, or when the tide of war had swept on to other regions, the caravans would again set out, not unfrequently only to encounter new obstacles, that patience and time could alone overcome; and but to reach at last the end of a journey after years spent in fatigue, during which the strain upon their courage and strength had never ceased.

In the remoter parts of Asia all these difficulties are even now to be met with. When we passed through Tartary and Thibet, we had to encounter the same obstacles as those which opposed the progress of travellers in the middle ages. Instead of having been diminished they have perhaps even increased, since these numerous hordes have ceased to obey a single sovereign. Time has destroyed most of the towns, the roads uniting them have been broken up; such slight traces of cul-

tivation as used to appear at intervals have been buried beneath the sands of the desert; and some new difficulty will meet the traveller through these desolated regions at every step. To meet with other men, which in civilised countries re-animates the traveller, and gives the hope of assistance, is here regarded as a new cause for fear, and it not unfrequently happens, that two caravans crossing the same plain, will suspiciously watch each other and arm themselves, as if expecting an enemy, will arrange the ranks of their escort, increase the pace of their horses, cross each other's course, and then fly with the utmost speed, as if in these dangerous regions man himself was the peril most to be feared.

The accounts of Rubruk and Plano-Carpini are little more than the history of their personal adventures, their transactions with the Tartars, and their constant struggles against hunger, thirst, fatigue, and the inclemencies of the climate. Marco Polo, on the contrary, who remained for a long period in Central Asia, and visited many of the countries there with the rank of ambassador, never let slip an opportunity of examining the plants, animals, and other productions of each, making especial mention of those which appeared to him, either on account of their value, utility, or commercial importance, most worthy of note. His observations upon the various arts describe processes as minutely as results; the stuffs manufactured, the peculiar kinds of embroidery work, and the modes of working metals, are all touched upon. In less civilised regions, he speaks of the animals which furnish the most valued skins; if spices are collected in any country he visits, he describes the different plants and barks most highly thought of; in fact, wherever he goes, Marco Polo shows that he belongs to a maritime and commercial nation, and never forgets that he is a Venetian, and that his observations on the industry and navigation of the nations with whom he comes in contact, will be peculiarly interesting to his countrymen.

In his narrative, Marco Polo devotes himself especially to the description of Cathay, so long unknown to Europeans, and the general aspect of which presents so much that is remarkable. The enormous population of this vast empire, the brilliant court of Pekin with its extraordinary customs, the great towns thronged with inhabitants, industrious, cultivated, and literary; the artificial canals connecting one province with another; the wonders performed in agriculture; the system of government, at once so complete and pliant,—all could not but be sources of profound astonishment to the dwellers in the West, since all that the celebrated Venetian describes is at once so prodigious, so incredible, and yet so remarkable for its exactitude and truth. During the whole of our long residence in the extreme East, we studied the Celestial Empire with the greatest minuteness; since our return we have read the account of Marco Polo's journey, and there, in the pages written six centuries ago, we find reproduced the character and habits of the very men among whom we spent so many years! And yet since the account was put together, though these people have been shaken by long, frequent, and fierce revolutions, they have nevertheless invariably preserved their own individual characteristics, that stamp which distinguishes them from all other nations. The Chinese of the ninth century, so well described by Arab writers, are the same as those that Marco Polo speaks of in the thirteenth, although they were then under the dominion of the Mongol Tartars. Further on, in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese, doubling the Cape of Good Hope by sea, discover China, and recognise the people that the celebrated traveller had already made known in Europe. And now, in our time, when we visit the "Central Empire," we again meet the same Chinese which were described by the Arabs, by Marco Polo, and by the Portuguese.

Marco Polo's account, although received with disbelief when published, now enjoys the utmost favour. No work

has ever furnished more material for other authors, none has been more commented on; and it must at the same time be admitted that no other has been more deserving of the honour, either on account of the variety or the extent of the information it contains. Although it was at first supposed to be false and exaggerated, its sincerity and accuracy are now universally recognised. The incredulity with which it was originally received, has given place to a perfect confidence; and far from there being now any disposition to underrate its importance, the tendency is perhaps rather to exaggerate it. and the same traveller who was once ridiculed with the nickname of Messer Marco Millione, has been since called the Humboldt of the thirteenth century; and though this eulogy may be carried too far, it at least shows the superiority of the Venetian traveller over the others of his own day.

Notwithstanding the interest which is constantly maintained throughout Marco Polo's narrative, one can hardly help regretting the absence of any information as to the state of Christianity in Central Asia, and especially in China, at the period in which he writes. His long residence in those countries, and the important duties with which the Khan intrusted him, must assuredly have placed in his possession all the details of this interesting question; but, notwithstanding this, it is only occasionally and by chance that he drops a word with reference to Christians or Christianity. Thus, in describing the formidable insurrection raised by Nayan, the nephew of the Khan, and the great victory that the emperor obtained over him, he contents himself with saying that Nayan was a Christian; that the sign of the cross was affixed to his standards; and that a large number of men in his army were Christians, not a few of whom remained upon the field of battle.*

The Jews and Mohammedans belonging to Kublai's army

* "Et sachiés que Naian estoit Cristienz baleizienz et à certe bateille avoit-il les crois de Christ sor la enseinge."— *Voyage of Marco Polo*, p. 85.

were constantly mocking these Christians, who had just submitted to the authority of the emperor, saying, that although Nayan had raised the standard of Jesus Christ, they had nevertheless received no assistance from him. The Christians, who were at last unable to bear these taunts, carried their complaints to the emperor, who answered them, in the presence of their enemies, to the following effect:—

"Your God has refused to assist Nayan; but you need not on this account distress yourselves, nor become ashamed of your religion; because it was through the justice of God that he abstained from favouring crime and injustice. Nayan rebelled against his sovereign, and in his impiety implored the assistance of your God, but this good and just God would not protect such wicked attempts." He then forbade the enemies of the Christians to insult either their God or the cross.

In describing the large and important towns of China, Marco Polo will sometimes mention the Christian churches. Thus, he says, that at Han-Tcheou-Fou there was one, and at Tching-Kian-Fou three; but this meagre information is all that is given by the Venetian traveller. There can be little doubt, however, of the progress made by Christianity throughout Tartary, and especially in China. It is well known that the Nestorians were diffused over the whole surface of this rich and extensive empire, that they were governed by a bishop at Pekin, and that they exercised considerable influence over the numerous population. Unfortunately, however, this influence was often abused, and their conduct was little in harmony with that moderation and charity prescribed by the Gospel. They invariably tormented and oppressed all Christians who did not agree with the errors of their own sect, and viewed with jealousy the success of the Catholic missionaries; it having even been said that they would have preferred seeing the souls they pretended to save lost altogether, than let them owe their salvation to the assistance of others:

to so great an extent may the most ardent zeal be perverted by pride and fanaticism.

It was in the midst of these unworthy brethren that Jean de Monte Corvino was compelled to reside for several years. Sent on a mission to Tartary in 1289, he crossed the Indies, and after great fatigue arrived at the court of the great Khan, then fixed at Pekin, or, as it was then called, Khanbalik (royal residence). He set to work with indefatigable ardour at the task of converting both grandees and people, and, after the example of the great apostle, he was all things to all men that he might gain all men to Jesus Christ. The Nestorians, however, could not see without jealousy so persevering a zeal. They endeavored to calumniate him and to turn his friends from him, to rob him of all protection, and to compel him, by persecutions and by throwing obstacles in his way, to renounce his apostleship. They accused him now of being a spy, then a robber and an assassin; but though they carried their hostility to the utmost pitch, it was easy for this virtuous missionary to prove his innocence, and his calumniators did not go unpunished; for the emperor, becoming indignant at their malice, condemned several of them to exile.

Jean de Monte Corvino, however, patient amid all his trials, instead of allowing himself to be disheartened by the difficulties before him, only redoubled his efforts; and the exertions of the good missionary were crowned with success, for before long the Catholic mission of Pekin became the most flourishing in the empire. A short time after his arrival, Monte Corvino succeeded in restoring to the unity of the Catholic church George, King of the Kéraites, who had professed the Nestorian doctrine. The example of the monarch was followed by a large number of his subjects, and he himself assumed the Minorite order so that he might be able to assist the professed ministers of God in the celebration of the holy services. He built also a large and beautiful church which he called the Roman church, and died a fervent Christian in 1299, leaving a

son of three years old, to whom he had given the name of John, in honour of the missionary who had first enabled him to see his errors and had directed his conscience.

Besides this, Jean de Monte Corvino had himself erected two churches even in the town of Pekin, where he performed service with all the pomp of the Catholic ceremonial. He trained a large number of young Tartars to chant, and the emperor became fond of coming to hear them, and sometimes would publicly present the poor monks with marks of his esteem and veneration. The religion of Jesus Christ thus spread rapidly among their populations formerly so plunged in gross superstition and barbarism, and Jean de Monte Corvino became so thoroughly conversant with the Tartar language, that he translated the Testament and the Psalms of David into that tongue, and published an edition of it, remarkable for the beauty and elegance of the characters; a performance which gained him much renown amongst a people who had already obtained some insight into the ancient civilisation and literature of the Chinese.

Jean de Monte Corvino himself describes with a beautiful simplicity the difficulties he encountered, and the final success of his mission, in a letter addressed to the vicars-general of the Dominicans and Franciscans, and to all missionaries established in the province of Persia; this curious document is as follows:—

"Khanbalik in the kingdom of Cathay, the 8th of the month of January, 1305.

"I, brother Jean de Monte Corvino, of the order of Minor Friars, quitted Tauris, the capital of Persia, in the year of our Lord 1291. I penetrated into the Indies, and remained thirteen months in the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle. There I baptized about a hundred persons; and there the companion of my journey, brother Nicolas de Pistore, died and was buried. For myself, proceeding further on, I arrived at the

kingdom of Cathay, the dominions of the Emperor of Tartary, called the great Khan. On presenting to him the letters from the Pope, I endeavoured to induce him to embrace the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ; but though he was himself too profoundly plunged in idolatry to do so, it did not prevent him from conferring many favours on the Christians. I have been at his court for two years. Certain Nestorians, who, though pretending to be Christians, conform but little to the Christian religion, have acquired much authority in this country, and will scarcely allow Christians of another creed to establish an oratory or a church, in which they might preach any doctrine differing from the Nestorian. These Nestorians, either directly or by means of persons whom they have corrupted by money, raised the most determined persecutions against me, saying everywhere that I had not been sent in reality, by our Lord the Pope, but that I was a dangerous spy and a seducer of the people; then they produced false witnesses who maintained that I had killed a foreign ambassador, in India, who had been entrusted with a treasure to take to the Emperor, which I had myself seized upon. Their persecutions lasted for nearly five years, during which time I was often in the hands of justice, and was threatened with an ignominious death; but at last, by the grace of God, the testimony of a certain individual proved my innocence to the emperor, and at the same time showed him the malice of my enemies, who were then exiled with their wives and families. I remained here alone for eleven years, at the end of which time I was joined by brother Arnold, a German of the province of Cologne. I have built a church at Khanbalik, the principal residence of the emperor, which has been finished now for about six years, and in which there is a belfry with three bells. In this church I have altogether baptized nearly 6000 persons, and if it had not been for the calumnies of which I have spoken, the number would have been 13,000; I have successively received a hundred and fifty boys, the sons

of pagans, whose ages varied from seven to eleven years, who had been hitherto without any religion at all, have baptized them and instructed them in the elements of Greek and Latin literature. I have written for their use Psalters as well as thirty collections of hymns and two breviaries; so that eleven of these boys can now chant in choirs, whether I am present myself or not, as is done in our own monasteries: and several of the others are able to transcribe the Psalters and other books. The emperor is very fond of hearing them sing.

"At certain hours I have the bells rung, and celebrate divine services before these children, and not having any written service, we chant a little from memory. A prince named George, one of the illustrious race of the emperor, who was formerly a Nestorian, attached himself to me in the first year of my arrival. I converted him to the true Catholic faith, he has received minor orders, and when I celebrate divine service he assists me dressed in his royal robes. The Nestorians have accused him of being an apostate, and have raised persecutions against him; he has, however, restored the larger portion of his people to the true faith, and has had a church built with true royal magnificence, in honour of the Holy Trinity, which he has called the Roman Church. Six years ago, in 1299, the king, George, died a true Christian, leaving for an heir a child of nine years of age.

"The brothers of the king who adhere obstinately to their Nestorian errors, have endeavoured since his death to pervert those whom he had converted, and to restore them to their former errors. Unfortunately, I am here alone, and cannot leave the emperor, and it is, therefore, impossible for me to visit this church, which is at a distance of twenty days' journey. If, however, any good brother comes to me, I hope to be able to repair all this mischief, as I have still in my possession the powers conferred on me by the late king. I repeat, also, that but for the calumnies of which I have spoken, the fruit of my labours would have been very abundant, and

if I could have been assisted by two or three companions, the emperor himself might perhaps have been baptized.

"I have not for twelve years received any intelligence either from the court of Rome, or from our own order, and I am entirely ignorant of the state of affairs in the West. I entreat the minister-general of our order, to send me a Antiphonary, a list of the saints, a Gradual and a written Psalter, for a model, as at present I am only provided with a portable breviary containing the short lessons, and a small missal. If I had but one copy, the boys could transcribe it. I am building a second church, in order to divide these boys. I have learnt to read and write in the Tartar language, and have translated into that tongue the whole of the New testament and the Psalter, which I have had written in very beautiful Tartar characters; and finally I read, write, and preach publicly the law of Jesus Christ. I had arranged with the King George to have translated, if he had lived, the whole of the Latin ritual, in order that the praises of the Lord might have been chanted everywhere in his dominions. During his lifetime, I was in the habit of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the mass, in his church, according to the Latin ritual. The son of the King George has been named John, in consequence of it being my name, and I sincerely hope that with the help of God he will follow in the footsteps of his father."

What zeal for the glory of God, and for the salvation of souls, and, at the same time, what energy is exhibited in the conduct of these wonderful men, to induce them to live thus at the extremity of the world, in the midst of sorrows and trials, without the power even of corresponding with their brethren or friends. Jean de Monte Corvino remains for twelve years without hearing anything whatever from the West, and then simply announces the fact without complaining, and without letting slip a word of sadness or discontent. Faith alone could have produced resignation like this.

In 1305, the generous apostle of the Tartars and Chinese

wrote to the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries in Persia, to give them some information as to the persecutions raised by the Nestorians, and the progress of his mission. "I have prepared," he says, "six pictures from the Old and New Testament, for the instruction of the ignorant, and several of the children whom I have collected and baptized, have, since then, been taken to the Lord. Altogether, since I have been in Tartary, I have baptized 5000 persons; and I have now founded a new establishment close to the palace of the great Khan, from the door of which, indeed, it is only a stone's throw. A certain Peter de Lucalongo, an excellent Christian and a rich merchant, who travelled with me from Tauris, has bought the piece of land at his own expense, and presented it to me, for the love of God; and when we chant there, the great Khan can hear us from his own apartments. The two churches that I have built are about two miles apart, and are both in the interior of the town, which is of a very great size. I can assure you, indeed, that in no part of the world is there as vast an empire as that of the great Khan. I have permission to enter the palace, andan acknowledged office at court, as legate from the pope, and the emperor pays me as much respect as any other prelate."

In the following year, Jean de Monte Corvino relates to his correspondents in Persia, a very remarkable occurrence. He says, "Some messengers came to me from a certain part of Ethiopia requesting me to go and preach the Gospel in their country, or to send some trustworthy missionaries thither. They stated, that ever since the time of St. Matthew the Evangelist and his disciples, they had been without a Christian minister; that they were very desirous of being instructed in this faith, and that, if any missionaries were sent to them, they would all be converted and become Christians. Many of them were then only Christians in name, contenting themselves with living soberly, as they were unprovided with any

one able to explain the doctrine to them, or to read the Holy Scripture."*

It is not very easy to discover who these messengers were, that Monte Corvino speaks of. They could not have been Abyssinians, since this country is too far from Pekin; but it is most probable that they belonged to the island of Ceylon, and were dependent upon the Nestorian metropolitans, and that they were frequently in communication with China, both by sea and land.

Providence at last, nowever, put an end to the long and sad isolation of Jean de Monte Corvino; and gave a great additional encouragement to his zeal and perseverance. In 1307, the sovereign pontiff, Clement V., sent out seven missionaries to China, namely Gérard, Peregrin, André de Pérouse, Nicolas de Bautra, Peter of Castile, Andrutius d'Assise, and William of Villeneuve. In order to give an especial authority to this mission in the extreme East, the pope created Jean de Monte Corvino, archbishop of Pekin, and made the seven missionaries, whose names we have just enumerated, his suffragans. Before their departure they received the episcopal consecration, and were invested with numerous privileges, to facilitate the performance of their duties in such remote countries. Clement V. sent a letter to Jean de Monte Corvino, by which he placed him at the head of all the Catholic missions in the extreme East, on the condition of always submitting to the Roman pontiff, and of receiving the Pallium from him. He wrote at the same time to Timour, the great Khan of the Tartars, exhorting him to become a Christian, and thanking him for the protection he had accorded to the Catholics.†

Of the seven Franciscan monks appointed for the journey into Tartary, three only succeeded, in 1308, in reaching their destination, and in consecrating Jean de Monte Corvino Archbishop of Pekin; these were Gérard, Peregrin, and André de

* This letter is dated Khanbalik, Quinquagesima Sunday, in April, 1306.

† Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, vol. vii. p. 228, &c.

Pérouse; of the others, Nicolas de Bautra, Peter of Castile, and Andrutius d'Assise, died of fatigue soon after entering the Indies, while the remaining one, William of Villeneuve, returned to Italy, and was appointed Bishop of Sagona, in Corsica, in the year 1325.*

That must have been a moment of indescribable delight which united the venerable missionary of Khanbalik with three children of Saint Francis, who had come to partake the cares of his apostleship. What joy must it have been for him to hear once more that native language, whose accents never sound so beautiful and harmonious as in a foreign land! With the help of his suffragrans the archbishop continued to preach with the same zeal as before, and the arrival of new comers seemed to redouble the strength, energy, and health of the old missionary, and to renew in him the ardour of youth. He taught them his prudence and wisdom, and communicated to them the results of his long experience and apostleship. They helped one another, and conversions became so numerous, and the fruit of their labour so abundant that it became necessary to have more assistance still, and in 1312, the sovereign pontiff despatched three new suffragans to the Archbishop of Khanbalik.† They were again taken from the Order of Saint Francis, and their names were Thomas, Jérôme, and Peter of Florence. In the bull‡ which Clement V. sent to Peter de Florence, he states that, in consequence of the great increase in the number of Christians throughout China and Tartary, he thought it advisable to create new episcopal sees, in order to facilitate the further propagation of the faith.

* At the time of his election, Pope Jean XXII. stated that William had been consecrated a bishop by Clement V., and had been sent to preach the Gospel to the nations of Tartary. (Wadding, vol. vi. p. 147.) In 1328 Bishop William was translated to the Episcopal see of Tergeste, where he died in 1331, and there his tomb may still be seen.—Ferdugellus, *Italiæ Sacræ*, vol. v. p. 582.

† Wadding, vol. vii. p. 53.

‡ This bull is dated at Avignon, where the tomb of Clement V. may still be seen.

It was about this time that a very rich Armenian lady took up her residence in Kai-Tou, in China, a large and very beautiful town not far from the sea, most probably the same as that now bearing the name of Han-Tcheou-Fou, the capital of the province of Tché-Kiang. Christianity was in a very flourishing state in Tai-Tou; but notwithstanding this, there was no convenient place in which the multitudes of the faithful could meet on any solemn occasion. The Armenian lady seeing this, attending only to the promptings of her zeal and piety, and determining to devote her immense riches to the salvation of souls, and the glory of God, built such a magnificent church there, that the Archbishop, Monte Corvino, gave it the name of a cathedral, raised the province into a diocese, and entrusted its administration to Bishop Gérard, who, dying soon after wards, was succeeded by Bishop Peregrin. In 1326, this district was in the charge of André de Pérouse, and it was from here that he wrote to the father of the convent of Pérouse, giving some of the details of his journey in Central Asia, and speaking also of the state of the Catholic missions in China.*

"We are separated," he says, "by such a vast stretch of sea and land, that I scarcely dare hope my letter will ever reach you. . . . You will doubtless have heard of the difficulties we encountered by land and water, of the trials, dangers, fatigues, and sufferings we had to endure; how we were sometimes robbed of everything, even of our horses and clothes. At last, however, by God's help, we arrived at Khanbalik, the the capital of the empire of the great Khan, and consecrated the archbishop, according to the instructions we received from the Holy See. Our residence at Khanbalik lasted for five years, and during that time we received an *alafa*† through the munificence of the emperor; that is to say, food and cloth-

* Wadding, vol. vii. p. 44.

† An Arabic word which means *salary, appointment.* It is in use among the Turks, the Persians, and the Tartars, and we have even met with it among the inhabitants of Thibet.

ing for eight persons. This pension is granted by the emperor to envoys from foreign princes, to orators, warriors, artists, archers, to the poor, and to persons of various conditions. It would take too long to describe to you the riches, magnificence, and glory of the great Khan; the extent of his empire, the number of the towns, and their grandeur, the multitudes of people subject to him, or the administration of the empire, where no one dares to raise a sword against another. I pass over all these things in silence, because they would seem incredible; I myself, who am here upon the spot, sometimes receive accounts that I can scarcely believe.

"There is a large town on the sea-shore named Kaï-Tong, where a magnificent church has been built by a rich Armenian lady. The Archbishop of Khanbalik created it a cathedral, and confided its government to Bishop Gérard, during his life time, together with its endowments. On the death of this bishop, who was buried in the church, the archbishop intended me to succeed him, and occupy the see; but as I did not accept the nomination, the Bishop Peregrin was sent there on the first opportunity. After having governed this church for some years, he expired in the year 1322, nine days after the festival of St. Peter and St. Paul. Before the decease of the Bishop Peregrin, I had been living in the environs of Khanbalik, for about four years, after which I obtained the transfer of my imperial pension to Kaï-Tong, where I repaired with a brilliant escort of eight cavaliers appointed by the emperor. Bishop Peregrin was then still living, and I had a tolerably pretty church built, in a forest not far from the town, with accommodation for twenty-two monks, and four rooms for the prelates. The imperial subsidy was my only resource, the value of which, in the estimation of some Genoese merchants, may be about a hundred gold florins annually, and the greater part of this has been absorbed in the construction of this residence, which, for magnificence and convenience, surpasses the most beautiful hermitages of our province.

"A short time after the decease of brother Peregrin, I received an archiepiscopal decree, placing me at the head of this district, and many motives have induced me to accept this nomination; nevertheless, I inhabit the church in the town, and that in the forest, alternately. My health is good, and I can still labour for some months of the year for the salvation of souls. My hair, however, is white, the effect partly of age, and partly of the fatigue of apostleship.

"In this empire there are men of all nations under the sun, and monks of all sects; and as every one is permitted to live in whatever belief he pleases, the opinion, or rather the error, being upheld that each one may effect his salvation in his own religion, we are enabled to preach in perfect liberty and security. Among the Jews and Saracens no conversions have been made; the idolaters come in great numbers to be baptized, but many of them do not in reality live according to Christianity. Four of our brethren have been martyred in the Indies by the Saracens; and although one of them was thrown into the middle of a blazing fire without sustaining any injury, this astounding miracle did not change the wicked intentions of the infidels. I have transmitted these details to you, in order that you may communicate them to other fraternities, and I have not addressed any of my spiritual brethren or my personal friends, because I know not whether they are alive or dead; I beg them therefore to excuse me, and I salute them all, and especially the minister and custodian of Pérouse. All the suffragan bishops created by Clement have died at Khanbalik, I alone remaining. The brothers Nicolas de Bautra, Andrutius d'Assise, and Peter of Castello, died when they first entered the Indies. May your fraternity always be in peace with the Lord."*

This letter is dated at Kaï-Tong, in January, 1326.

* Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, vol. vi. p. 56.

Missionaries, in the middle ages, wrote but little. There was at that period no publication like the "Annales de la Propagation de la Foi," to collect the accounts of the proceed ings of the numerous preachers of the Gospel scattered over the face of the earth; and it is consequently difficult to obtain any correct account of the state of a mission at that time. The few precious fragments of correspondence, however, that have been preserved to us are enough to throw light upon the successful labours of the apostles in the extreme East. Thanks to the religious liberty enjoyed in China and Tartary, Christianity had made great progress there, and journeys into these remote countries were much more frequent than is now supposed. Merchants were drawn thither in pursuit of gain from India and from the Italian republics, and it is not a little curious to learn that a church was built in one of the principal towns of China by an Armenian lady, or to hear André de Pérouse valuing his imperial subsidy at a hundred gold florins, through the information of Genoese merchants.

Zeal for the diffusion of the Gospel, however, attracted even more strangers to Central Asia than the interests of commerce. Numbers of monks of the Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic undertook this long and perilous journey through motives of piety, and besides those who were officially despatched by the Holy See and the Christian kings, we hear of many in the remoter parts of Asia, alone, without protection, food, or money, rich only in their trust in God, animated by zeal for the faith, and burning with the desire of doing good to men and gaining souls to Jesus Christ. One of the foremost of these voluntary apostles was the holy Oderic, who travelled over many parts of the world spreading the Gospel wherever he went. Born at Pordenone in Friuli, at about 1286, he entered the Order of St. Francis at Udine. There he set himself to overcoming his passions by the most extraordinary mortifications. Not content with going always barefoot and wearing a simple tunic for his only

garment, with taking no nourishment but bread and water he constantly subjected himself to the scourge, and wore a vest of chain mail next his skin. It is not easy for people at the present day to conceive how the saint remained in health; but Odoric's long journeys and the immense labour he performed, prove to us that the holy rigours of mortification which he underwent endowed his mind with a wonderful strength, while it left vigour enough in his body to enable him to go through, during sixteen years, an almost incredible amount of labour and fatigue. Humility, the true test of piety, was always the principle that actuated this pious cenobite of the monastery of Udine. He invariably refused the dignities of his Order that were offered to him, and desiring only solitude and prayer, he obtained permission from his superiors to pass a hermit's life. While living thus in seclusion, he was inspired with the desire of devoting himself to the conversion of the infidels in the further parts of Asia. He left his monastery at about the year 1314, and repaired to Constantinople, and having there crossed the Black Sea, he travelled by land to Trebizond, and passing through Great Armenia to Ormuz, he embarked at this port for Malabar. At Tana he was informed of the glorious death of the four Franciscan monks in Hindostan, of which André de Pérouse makes mention in his letter. These four missionaries, Thomas de Tolentino, James of Padua, Peter of Sienna, and the lay brother Demetrius of Tiflis, had also started for China for the purpose of preaching the Gospel there. Intending, on their passage through the Indies, to visit the church of St. Thomas at Méliapour, they were thrown by a tempest on to the island of Salcetti. The governor of this district, a fanatic Mussulman, seized upon the Franciscans, and asked them what they thought about Mahomet. Thomas replied, with a saintly dignity, that the impostor would drag to perdition all those who believed in his false doctrine. On hearing these words the Mussulmans became furious, and employed both

threats and promises to induce him to recall what he had said. Seeing that the Franciscans were immovable in their faith, and refused to apostatize, they tore off their cowls and exposed them, tied to posts, to the full heat of the sun, which at that place and time can never be borne for long. The monks, however, never left off singing the praises of the Lord, even while the fierce rays of the sun were destroying them; and this wonderful conduct served only to increase the rage of the persecutors, who, after having made them endure the most horrible torments, put them to death. James of Padua had his head split by a scimitar; one of the wretches then, seizing hold of the beard of Thomas de Tolentino, whose age rendered him even more venerable than the others, plunged his sword into his back, and as at this moment he was invoking the Holy Virgin in a loud voice, another cut his throat. Pierre de Sienna was decapitated, and Demetrius of Tiflis, after receiving several wounds, was killed with a scimitar.

The blood of these noble martyrs, however, was not shed without effect, and many were converted through its means.

The *Annales des Frères Mineurs** states, that the governor of Tana saw one night as he slept the four Franciscans, one at each angle of his bed, brandishing four swords of fire, and threatening him with death if he did not treat the Christians more humanely. Alarmed at this vision, he uttered loud cries, implored mercy, and the next day caused the chains of the Christian captives to be broken, recalled those who had been banished, and, by a public edict, forbade, under pain of capital punishment, offering the smallest insult to the adorers of Jesus Christ. These new regulations favoured the conversion of a great number of idolaters and Mussulmans.

It was under these circumstances that Oderic of Friuli arrived at Tana, where he learned the details of the glorious

* Walding, *Annales Minorum*, vol. vii. p. 232.

martyrdom of his brethren. He knew that it had been their intention to bear to China the faith of Jesus Christ, for which they had so nobly shed their blood in the Indies; and Oderic would not have China entirely deprived of these apostles; even their bones, he thought, might still exercise a salutary influence, and God would bestow on those precious relics a special virtue for sanctification and salvation. He caused the coffins to be opened, therefore, collected with veneration the bones of the martyrs, and determined himself to remove them into China; and he accordingly set out from Tana with this rich treasure, in company with another of the brethren and a servant. It was an affecting thing to see this holy priest departing and bearing to nations of infidels the bones of his brethren martyred for the faith, and making of them a kind of sacred armour in which to march to the conquest of souls. During his long peregrinations, he never ceased to watch with tender and pious solicitude over his precious charge; and in the night, he was in the habit of placing it under his head, as if to derive from this martyr-pillow the indomitable courage of the apostle.

Oderic, after having visited the islands of Ceylon, Sumatra, Java, and Borneo, arrived at length in China; and the enumeration of the difficulties he had to surmount in order to reach it, makes us presume that he crossed the marshy countries of Pegu and Ava. He made his entrance into the empire by the southern provinces, which he calls Manzi, from the word Man-dze, by which were designated then, as now, the Chinese of the south. The description he gives of the country and its inhabitants, "who," says he, "are all artisans or tradesmen," is so accurate that it is easy to recognise, more than five hundred years after, the nation visited by Oderic in the fourteenth century. He speaks of several very populous towns which he met with on his way, and, amongst others, of Sou-Tcheou, whose beauty and wealth he extols. He crossed the Blue river and arrived at Han-Tcheou-Fou, which he

compares to Venice; and it was there that he deposited his precious burden which he had so religiously watched over all the way from Hindostan. We already know that this Chinese city, regarded under several dynasties as the capital of the whole empire, was celebrated in the middle ages for the brilliant prosperity of its Christian church, and was the metropolis of a diocese.

Oderic found here four Franciscans, who divided with André de Pérouse the pastoral care of this new flock of the faithful, and it was doubtless great joy to them to receive from the hands of Oderic the holy relics of four missionaries whom they had expected as living men, but who had thus already obtained, almost at the commencement of their apostolical career, the palm of martyrdom.

Oderic de Friuli admired at Han-Tcheou-Fou the beautiful cathedral, the result of the pious munificence of the Armenian lady, and, in the environs of the town, the church and monastery, built by the bishop André de Pérouse, in the middle of a wood. The missionaries cultivated with zeal and affection that portion of their Father's field which had been entrusted to them, and God granted his blessing to their pious labours. Conversions were numerous, and in different classes of society. Amongst the neophytes, Oderic mentions a rich and powerful man with whom he dwelt during his residence at Han-Tcheou-Fou,—and who procured for him a singular spectacle in a Buddhist convent. We are about to quote literally the narration of the Franciscan monk.*

"One day, the Christian neophyte said to me, 'Father, will you come and have the pleasure of an excursion into the town?' 'Willingly,' answered I. He immediately sent for a boat, we entered it, and went to visit a great monastery of Bonzes. The Christian neophyte, having called one of these Bonzes, said to him, 'Do you see this Frank priest? he comes from the regions where the sun sets, and he is now going to Khan-

* Bollandi, *Acta Sanct.*, t. i. p. 991.

balik to pray for the life of the emperor. Show him some rarity of our country, in order that he may say, when he shall one day return into his own land, "I saw at Han-Tcheou-Fou, such or such a curious thing."' 'I will show him,' said the Bonze, 'the wonder of our monastery.' There were, in a corner of the apartment, several baskets filled with the fragments of the repast of the community. The Bonze took them, and, having opened a door, introduced us into a magnificent park, in the midst of which arose a hill planted with beautiful trees. We stopped at the foot of the hill; the Bonze struck several times on a tam-tam, and at the sound we perceived a number of animals, of various species, hastening down towards us. The greater number resembled apes and cats; there were, at least, three thousand of them: all these animals ranged themselves in order, and the old Buddhist priest distributed to them the fragments from the convent repast. When all had eaten according to their appetite, at the first stroke of the tam-tam they quietly began to climb up the side of the hill again, and disappeared into their dens. This sight was so strange that I could not help laughing heartily: at length I said to the old man, 'Tell me the meaning of what I have just seen.' 'You have just seen,' said he, 'the souls of illustrious men, whom we feed for the love of God.' 'These cats, these apes, these dogs, all these beasts,' answered I, 'are not spiritual souls—they are merely animals.' 'No,' said the Bonze, 'they are not beasts; they are the souls of the dead. Noble souls, after this life, pass into the bodies of noble animals, and the souls of peasants inhabit the bodies of the vilest beasts.' It was in vain I preached," adds brother Oderic: "I found it impossible to argue him out of his superstition."

It is known that Buddhists admit the doctrine of metempsychosis: they are persuaded that the souls of beasts have formerly been human souls; and hence arises the respect of Buddhist devotees for animals, and the minute precautions which they take for fear of hurting them. It was not there-

fore surprising to see, in a monastery of Bonzes, animals of all kinds, tamed, caressed and petted, assembling at the sound of the tam-tam to take their meals, and constituting, in some measure, a part of the religious community. The old Bonze of the convent of Han-Tcheou-Fou might be sincere in his belief, and might really think himself surrounded by friends, when he was in the midst of the apes and cats of his own park; and it is even probable that he might have repulsed, as impieties, the exhortations of the Franciscan brother.*

Oderic wrought numerous conversions in the southern provinces of China. He then proceeded towards the north, and visited on his way several famous cities where there were neophytes or Franciscan missionaries. He speaks of a city which had forty stone bridges, and of several numerous fleets which he met with, doubtless on the Yang-tse-Kiang and the lake Pou Yang. He crossed a great river, on which he makes but a single remark, but this characterises, in a remarkable manner, the Hoang-Ho, or Yellow River. "This river," says he, "passes through the midst of Cathay, to which it causes great injury by its inundations." It is indeed well known that the overflowing of the Hoang-Ho has at all times occasioned much distress in the Chinese Empire.

The indefatigable missionary arrived at length at Khanbalik, where he found the brethren of his Order honoured by the grandees and the people, and labouring with the greatest success in the conversion of the Tartars and Chinese. They even enjoyed special favours at the court of the great Khan. "I have often been present," says Oderic, "at the imperial fetes; for we Minorite Brothers have in the palace a place specially appointed for us. In the ceremonies they make us go first,

* We have visited, at Bombay, a vast and handsome hospital, intended for the reception of old and invalid animals. There are to be seen incurable quadrupeds, birds, and reptiles, on whom the pity of the Hindoos lavished the most tender cares. Unfortunately, there is not any similar establishment for men. It seems, nevertheless, as if some interest ought to have been felt for them also, were it only because they may, perhaps, formerly have been animals.

and we give our blessing to the great Khan." He relates tha one day he had been walking, with four other missionaries of Pekin, outside the walls of the town. They were seated under a great tree, which protected them by its shade from the heat of the sun, when they perceived at a distance the imperial chariot advancing towards them, surrounded by a brilliant escort. At this sight the missionaries prepared to do homage to the sovereign in a manner suitable to their rank. Amongst them was one who, being a bishop, wore his pontifical ornaments. He unfastened the cross which hung on his breast, placed it on the end of a stick, and when the imperial chariot came before them, he raised it in the air, whilst the priests sung in chorus the "Veni Creator." The great Khan asked the princes who surrounded him, what was the meaning of these songs; they answered that it was the Frank priests who were addressing their prayers to their God. The emperor then made the missionaries approach, and, at the sight of the cross, took off his cap and kissed it respectfully; "a proof," says the author who relates this fact, "that the Khan loved the Christian faith."* It is certain that the Catholic mission at Pekin was at this period, as Oderic himself says, very flourishing; and, by his exhortations, he succeeded in inducing several important personages of the court to embrace the gospel.

After a residence of three years at Khanbalik, Oderic de Friuli, listening only to the ardour of his zeal for the propagation of the faith, resolved to go still further, and seek for souls whom he might gain over to Jesus Christ. He quitted China, therefore, passed the great Wall, and plunged into the wilds of Tartary. He penetrated beyond the country of the Kéraites, the ancient kingdom of priest (or Prester) John, where he found the Christians much cooled from their former fervour, and almost entirely addicted to the errors of Nestorianism. He laboured to bring them back to the true faith of

* Marchinus, in vita. B. Odorici.

the Catholic Church; his zeal proved effectual with many, and he also baptized a great number of infidels. Having then traversed the vast province of Khan-Sou, he got as far as the capital of Thibet. "It is in this city," he says, "that the person dwells who is like the Pope of these countries. He is the chief and pontiff of all the idolaters, on whom he confers benefices and ecclesiastical dignities according to the rites of the country." Oderic describes the Thibetans as living under tents, and leading a nomadic life in the gorges of these lofty mountains. He observes, rather a curious fact, that the walls of the buildings in the capital are entirely black and white in colour.* When, in 1845, we visited the capital of Thibet, we noticed a circumstance that might perhaps tend to explain the words of the Franciscan missionary. There exists, in the suburbs of Liba-Ssa, a quarter in which the houses are entirely built of the horns of oxen and rams; these odd constructions are extremely durable, and present a very agreeable appearance to the eye. The horns of the oxen being smooth and whitish, and those of the rams, on the contrary, black and rough, these strange materials are wonderfully adapted to form a number of curious combinations and various patterns on the walls; the interstices between the horns are filled with mortar; and these are the only houses which are not whitened. The Thibetans have the good taste to leave them of their natural colour, without endeavouring to add anything to their wild and fantastic beauty. It would be superfluous to remark that the inhabitants of La-Ssa consume a great number of sheep and oxen; their houses of horns are an incontestable proof of this,† and it may not be impossible that, in the fourteenth century, the capital of Thibet was entirely constructed like the quarter we have endeavoured to describe.

The courage and zeal of the preachers of the gospel had, it seems, already carried the light of Christianity into countries

* "Civitas principalis toto est ex muris albis et nigris."—Bollandus, t. I. p. 992.

† Voyage au Thibet, t. II. p. 250.

almost inaccessible, on account of the lofty, rugged mountains, and the extreme severity of the climate; for Oderic found in the capital of Thibet Catholic missionaries who were effecting numerous conversions.

After having visited the different provinces of Thibet, Oderic crossed the Himalaya mountains and traversed India and Persia, on his return to Europe, and he arrived at Pisa in 1230. This indefatigable apostle had, in the course of sixteen years, visited the most distant and savage regions of the globe, sowing everywhere the evangelical seed. His great and sincere humility caused him to suppress, in his narration, the success of his long apostleship; but it is known that he converted and baptized more than twenty thousand infidels. When he again beheld his native country, he was so changed by the sufferings and miseries he had endured, his body was so emaciated, and his face so withered and blackened by the sun that his relations could not recognize him; nevertheless, the eyes of Christians must have contemplated, with affection and pride, this hero of the faith, must have thought him embellished by the rude marks of suffering, and found in his weather-beaten person the manly beauty of an old warrior returning from a long campaign mutilated and covered with scars.

Oderic remained at Pisa only a few days, and then hastened to Avignon to give an account to the sovereign pontiff of the state of the Catholic missions in Upper Asia, and to ask in the name of the great Khan for more apostolic labourers. He was already preparing to set out again on his way back to China, with a numerous colony of young missionaries, when he fell seriously ill, God it would seem being pleased with his servant, was willing to call him to himself, that he might reward him. The good priest, feeling his end approach, had himself removed to Udine, that he might die in the convent where he had received the habit of St. Francis. He asked, as a consolation, to render up his life to the Lord in the same place where it had been consecrated entirely to Him; this

grace was not denied him, and his patience and resignation during his long illness excited the admiration of those same brethren whom he had so much edified by his piety at the beginning of his career. As modesty induced him to remain silent respecting the great things that he had done for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, his superiors gave him a formal order to write an account of his apostolic journeys. He obeyed with simplicity; but as he was unable to write, it was brother Henri de Glatz who served as his secretary and received his narration. When he had ended his interesting tale, this admirable priest pronounced the following words:—"I, brother Oderic, of Friuli, certify before God and Jesus Christ, that all those things which have been here written I have seen with my own eyes, or heard from persons worthy of belief. There are many others which have not been written, because they would appear impossible to men of our country, excepting those who have travelled as I (poor sinner) have, in the land of the infidels."

As we have related, according to the account of Oderic de Friuli, some facts which have, perhaps, appeared rather extraordinary, we like to quote those expressions of sincerity which he pronounced upon his bed of pain, some moments before he appeared before God. We would willingly believe in the most astonishing adventures of travellers, if they always give us the same guarantees of their good faith. Oderic died at Udine, in the month of January, 1331, and as he had been celebrated for his eminent virtues, for the zeal of his apostleship, and the miracles he wrought during his life and after his death, the Church has placed him in the number of the Saints.

CHAPTER X.

Christianity amongst the Tartars of Persia.—Correspondence of Khan Œuldjaitou with Philip the Fair, Edward I., and Clement V.—2. Usbeck and the Province of Kiptchak.—Erection of the Archiepiscopal See of Soultaniyé.—3. Zeal of Pope John XXII. for the Propagation of the Faith. —Death of the Archbishop of Pekin, John de Monte Corvino.—Departure of Missionaries for China.—4. Apostasy and Martyrdom of Stephen of Hungary.—5. Mission of Pekin.—Progress of Christianity in China, and in the Steppes of Tartary.—Narrative of Pascal of Spain.—6. Violent Persecution of the Christians of Tartary.—Revolution in China.—The Missions are Desolated.—Tamerlane.—His Religious Principles.—Christianity Eclipsed in Upper Asia.

Whilst Christianity was progressing in China, Tartary, and Thibet, under the very eyes of the grand Lama, the Christians of Persia were a mark for the cruel persecutions of the Khan, who had become an apostate. We have seen that Gazan, respecting whom the Christians and the missionaries had so much cause to congratulate themselves, died of grief in 1302, after his sanguinary defeat by the Sultan of Egypt.

Gazan's successor was his brother Kharbendé, who had been baptized in his infancy, by the name of Nicholas. We have quoted the letter which the sovereign pontiff wrote to him in 1291 to congratulate him, and to give him advice as to the way in which he ought to live in the midst of pagans and Mussulmans. His mother Erouk-Khatoune was a Christian of remarkable piety, and publicly performed her religious duties in a chapel which she had had built in her palace. As long as his mother lived, Kharbendé showed himself a faithful and fervent Christian; but, after her death, he contracted a friendship with several Mussulmans, participated in their religious observances, and ended by declaring himself a fol-

lower of Mahomet. The apostasy of Kharbendé was a terrible blow to the Christians; and the courtiers, a class of people who at all times and in all countries are rather inspired by the sentiments of their master than by their own conscience and duty, immediately declared themselves the enemies of the Christians also. Three sincerely pious men, who wished to remain faithful to their religion, were loaded with abuse and cruelly persecuted, and this event proved disastrous to the Christians of Western Tartary. Reckoning from the fourteenth century and the apostasy of Kharbendé, we shall see the Tartar princes showing themselves less and less favourable to Christianity, and the faith continuing to decline in the kingdom of Persia.

The Lord, in his goodness, however, always gives some consolation with every sorrow; and, as if to soften the grief occasioned to Christians by the apostasy of the Khan of the Western Tartars, He made use of a Tartar, namely, Jaballaha, patriarch of the Nestorians, to bring back these wandering children into the pale of the church. Jaballaha, having been converted by Missionaries of the order of St. Dominic, joined the Roman church, and sent in 1304 to Pope Benedict XI. a letter of submission, in which he makes profession of the Catholic faith, and acknowledges the sovereign pontiff as the successor of St Peter, and the father of all Christians.*

This happy event was the cause of great joy to the Catholics, but it could not make them forget the wrongs which their brethren of Persia had to endure beneath the oppression of Kharbendé. This apostate prince had not, in truth, more sympathy with the Mussulmans than with the Christians; for the interests of his ambitious policy were the only motives of his conduct. As he desired to make war on the Saracens, he tried to excite the Christian princes against the Sultan of Egypt, allowing them to believe that he was quite disposed to make a public profession of Christianity. He even sent

* Raynald, Ann. 1304, No. 23. p. 596.

into Europe a certain Touman-Yldoudji, entrusting him with letters to Philip the Fair, to the King of France, to Edward I. the King of England, and to Pope Clement V. The letter addressed to Philip the Fair was in the Mongol language, and in the Oigour character. This is the translation.

Œuldjaitou,* Sultan.

Our words to the King of France, Sultan!

"In times past, you, Sultans of the Franks, were all united in friendship with our good great-grandfather, our good grandfather, our good father, our good elder brother; and notwithstanding the distance which separated you, you looked on each other as neighbours, you sent each other reciprocally all sorts of messages, you sent ambassadors and friendly presents; this you cannot have forgotten. Now that, by the power of God, we are seated on the great throne, we shall not depart from the commands of our predecessors, our good grandfather, our good father and our good elder brother; we shall follow their precepts, and what our good ancestors have promised you, we will perform, as if their words were our own oaths. We will bind ourselves in a stricter friendship than that of times past, we will send ambassadors to each other.

"We, elder and younger brothers, have been divided by the effect of the slanderous words of wicked vassals; now, Timour Khagan, Toctoga Tchabar, Togha and ourselves, the principal descendants of Thinguiz-Khan, are all, elder and younger, reconciled by the inspiration and with the help of God, so that, from the country of the Chinese in the East to the lake Tala, our people are united, and the roads are open. We with one accord have agreed to fall upon any one amongst us who shall change his mind.

* Kharbendé had assumed, since his apostasy, the name of Œul Ijaitou, and the title of Sultan.

"Unable to forget the ties of friendship which united you with our good grandfather, our good father and our good elder brother, I send you two messengers, Mamalac and Touman. It has been reported to me that you, Sultan of the Franks, are living in peace. Concord is certainly a good thing. Now, amongst us, as amongst you, we will all, by the power of God, fall together upon him who shall disturb our union, God knows it! Our letter is written on the eighth of the first month of summer in the year of the Serpent (14 Mai, 1305) in our residence of Alidjan."

This letter of the apostate Kharbendé has been taken from the archives of France, where it had remained for five hundred years, by Abel Rémusat. "The original document," says the learned Orientalist, "is a roll of cotton paper eighteen inches wide and more than nine feet long, containing forty-two lines, in the Mongol language and in Oigour characters perfectly resembling those of the letter of Argoun to Philip the Fair."

On this length has been stamped five times a great square seal in red ink. At the back and at one of the ends is found, in small writing scarcely legible, an Italian translation of the Mongol letter.

The two documents addressed to Philip the Fair by Argoun and by Kharbendé present a remarkable difference in the dimensions of the paper, the length of the lines, and the breath of the margins and intervals. It is known that all these particulars are important in the eyes of Orientals, and are used, according to the customs of their diplomacy, as a means of expressing and of graduating those marks of esteem which they grant to the princes with whom they wish to treat. Argoun, notwithstanding his "*goodness and beneficence*," has confined himself, in this respect, to what was strictly necessary. His letter shows no margins, and scarcely any spaces, and it is only six feet and a half long. That of Kharbendé is much more respectful; being ten feet long, and having the seal

affixed to it five times instead of three. The motto upon it is in antique characters of those which are composed of broken lines, and which the Chinese call "*tchouan*." It signifies, "By supreme decree, the seal of the descendant of the emperor, charged to reduce to obedience the ten thousand barbarians." By these last words are meant not only Persians, but Christians and Western nations in general who acknowledge or ought, it is assumed, to acknowledge the authority of the Son of heaven. It is quite unknown what reception was given in France to the Tartar envoys; as the letter which they left there is the only trace of their passage. No historian has spoken of it, and no copy has been preserved of the answer which the King of France must have given to the letter of Kharbendé. The Tartar ambassadors went from France into England, where they arrived after the death of Edward I., that is, after the 7th July, 1307, nearly two years from the date of the letters of which they were the bearers. The answer of Edward II., dated from Northampton, is expressed in these terms:—

"We have admitted the messengers whom your Highness has sent with letters to the prince Edward of glorious memory, lately King of England, our father, who before their arrival had ended his days; we have taken account of your letters, and of what your messengers have reported from you, according to the credentials you have given them.

"We render thanks to your Royal Magnificence for the good will and friendship which you and your ancestors have manifested towards our father, and which you now testify to us, by the sending of your ambassadors, by the desire you show to see concord and affection increase between you and us, and, above all, by the remembrance you preserve of the friendship which existed between your noble predecessors and our father, as is shown by the series of your letters; as well as by other things you mention.

"We rejoice in the Lord at the peace made amongst you,

by the grace of God, from the boundaries of the East to the sea.

"Further, as to what has been made known to you that peace and concord were reviving amongst us beyond the sea, we wish it to be known to your Royal Excellency, that we hope and finally believe that peace and concord will in a short time (by God's help) succeed to all the divisions and quarrels which have arisen in different parts."*

In a second letter, dated on the last day of November, 1307, Edward writes to the King of the Tartars:—"We would very willingly use all our endeavours to extirpate the abominable sect of Mahomet, if the distance of the places and other difficulties did not prevent us; for the present time is favourable to such a design. If we are well informed, the very books of this abominable sect themselves foretell its approaching destruction. Continue then your laudable design, and complete what you have undertaken for the extermination of this horrid sect.

"Some priests, honest and learned men, are coming to your court, with the intention (by God's help) of converting your people to the Catholic faith, out of which none can be saved; of instructing them in this religion, and exhorting them to make war on the detested sect of Mahomet; those who are coming are the venerable brother William, of the order of Preachers, Bishop of Lidd, with his venerable suite, whom we recommend to you, begging you to give them a good reception."†

This letter is an evident proof that the messenger of Kharbendé had not only allowed Edward to be ignorant that his master was a Mussulman, but that he had also grossly imposed on the King of England, in soliciting him, in the name of the apostate Kharbendé, to arm for the destruction of the abominable sect of Mahomet.

* Rymer, *Acta Publica*, t. i. p. 93. † Ibid. p. 100.

The Tartar messenger came also to Poitiers, where Pope Clement V. resided, and, doubtless, used the same expressions with him as he had with the King of England; this, at least, is what we may presume from the following letter, addressed by the sovereign pontiff to Kharbendé, and dated Poitiers, March 1st, 1308:—

"We have received, with the habitual condescension of the holy see, your envoy, Thomas Ildoutchi,* and the letters which he brings us from you, and we have carefully examined their contents, as well as listened with attention to what this messenger has said and proposed in your name. We have seen with pleasure, by these letters, and by the communications of your envoy, that appealing to our solicitude for the help and recovery of the Holy Land, you have offered us 200,000 horses and 200,000 loads of wheat, to be in Armenia at the period when the Christian armies shall arrive there; and besides that, to march in person with 100,000 horsemen, to second the efforts of the Christians, and expel from that sacred land the adverse forces of the Saracens. We have received this offer with satisfaction; it has fortified our minds like a spiritual nourishment. We believe that this messenger came from none other than Him, who, by his angel, charged Abacuc to carry to Daniel, in the lion's den, strengthening food. It is certain that you have given us sweet sustenance by offering us the hope of your magnificent assistance.

"We and our brethren will take care to submit this important affair to serious deliberation, supported by the Most High who strengthens his servants; we will execute, as far as in us lies, what God shall inspire; and when the favourable season shall arrive for crossing the sea, we will take care to give you notice, by our letters or our messengers, that you may be ready to accomplish what your magnificence has promised. But do you turn yourselves in faith and good

* The real name of the envoy was Touman Ildoudji. Ildoudji signifies "he who bears the sword," and Touman was, probably, one of the body-guard of Kharbendé.

works towards Christ, who is 'the way, the truth, and the life:' to serve Him, is to reign. Persevere firmly in your laudable resolution respecting that sacred land; endeavour, by that and other means, to acquire, in this life, the approbation of Christ the Redeemer, that you may deserve to obtain from Him an ample portion of blessedness in the heavens and of glory in this world. We, and the apostolic see, shall rejoice in your honours and your success."*

It was difficult, at that time, to determine the kings of Europe to undertake a crusade, since they now took little interest in the deliverance of the Holy Land, less, perhaps, than did the Tartars, who, intent upon the abasement of the Sultan of Egypt, were always endeavouring to win to their policy the princes of the West.

In 1312 Kharbendé began, alone, his expedition against the Saracens; but as the co-operation of the Westerns, which he had solicited, failed him at the moment of action, the war went on languidly, and produced no important events.

Kharbendé was then called, by other wars, into the Eastern part of his empire, where he died in 1317, and was succeeded by his son Abou-Saïd.

II.

Abou-Saïd was only twelve years old when he ascended the throne, and one of the first dignitaries of the kingdom had charge of the regency and the education of the young prince, who afterwards, when he assumed the reins of government, had to carry on many wars against his neighbours. The most formidable of his enemies was Usbeck, a descendant of the family of Tchinguiz-Khan, and governor of the province of Kiptchak.†

Usbeck was no friend to the Christians; he persecuted them, and forbade the missionaries to preach the gospel in his

* Raynald, t. 15. Ann. 1306, No. 30. p. 39.

† It is from this country that the people called in Europe Koraks or Cossacks, have proceeded.

dominions, whilst he favoured the sectaries of Mahomet, whose worship he had adopted. "He caused," says Aboulghazi, "Mahometanism to be introduced into all the provinces under his authority, which so conciliated the affections of his subjects, that, to give him a public mark of their devotion, they all assumed the name of Usbeck, which they have ever since retained; for before the reign of Usbeck-Khan, they were never known under that designation."*

The Mussulmans, strong in the support and protection of the sovereign, were continually contriving a thousand modes of harassing the Christians, who, until then, had enjoyed much liberty. They declared war against their bells, and persuaded Usbeck that their sound had an ill omen, and provoked calamities of every kind; and the Christians were therefore strictly forbidden to ring them. These and similar vexations were intended to effect the destruction of Christianity in that country; and William Adam, a Dominican monk who had been residing as a missionary in Persia, came to Avignon, where he related to the Pope, John XXII., the tribulations of the Christians living under the government of the Eastern Tartars. He added that Usbeck was not personally hostile to Christianity, though he had yielded to the influence of the Mussulmans, but that hopes might be even entertained of seeing him embrace the gospel. The sovereign pontiff, desirous of favouring these good inclinations, wrote to him in 1318, exhorting him to become a Christian, and to suppress the edicts against the liberty of worship; above all, he besought him, with the most earnest entreaties, to permit the Christians to assemble in their churches at the sound of the bell.

In the same year John XXII. erected the city of Soultaniyé, in Persia, into an archiepiscopal see. Kharbendé-Khan had founded this city in 1305, in the midst of the smiling meadows of Couconr; his father, Argoun, had conceived the project,

* Aboulghazi, *Hist. Generale des Tatars*, p. 457.

but death had prevented its execution, and it was now accomplished by Kharbendé. In a short time there was seen arising, as if by enchantment, a magnificent city, which received the name of Soultaniyé. It had several mosques, the principal of which was built at the expense of the Sultan, and richly adorned with marble and painted porcelain. The nobles vied with each other in building fine mansions; a whole quarter, containing a thousand houses, was constructed at the expense of the Vizier, who raised besides a large edifice, surmounted by two minarets, which contained a college, a hospital, and a convent, all richly endowed. The citadel was surrounded by a square wall, flanked with towers, each side five hundred cubits long, built of hewn stone, and so thick, that four horses might easily have run abreast upon the top of it. Kharbendé had also a mausoleum built for himself in the castle; it was an edifice of an octangular form, each side of which was sixty cubits in length, and covered with a cupola which rose to the height of a hundred and twenty cubits. The royal habitation consisted of a lofty pavilion, surrounded at a short distance by twelve smaller ones, each having a window, which looked out into a marble paved court, used as a hall of justice, and vast enough to contain two thousand persons, and several other buildings. During the whole of his reign, Kharbendé devoted considerable sums every year to the buildings at Soultaniyé, which, had he lived longer, would have become one of the finest cities in Asia.*

It did become in a short time the centre of commerce between Europe and the Indies, and strangers, attracted by the love of traffic and lucre, flocked thither from all parts of Asia; but they were preceded by the missionaries, always eager to hasten wherever there was good to be done or souls to be saved. The first apostle of Soultaniyé was Franco, a native of Perouse. Having assumed the habit of St. Domi

* D'Ohsson, Hist. des Mongols, t. iv. p. 486.

nic, towards the year 1270, he was not long in becoming conspicuous amongst his brethren by his virtues and talents; and at the beginning of the fourteenth century, after having given proof, in Italy, of his apostolic zeal, he was appointed, according to his own desire, to foreign missions. He went to the East, where the Armenians, Persians, and Tartars immediatly profited by his preaching, and assisted by several missionaries of the same order, he successfully encountered the superstitious pagans, cast down the idols of the nations, raised altars to the true God, and purified, in the waters of baptism, many thousands of new disciples to Jesus Christ. The greater number of these conversions were wrought in Persia, and particularly at Soultaniyé, where the Catholic religion speedily began to flourish, and the Christians there multiplied so rapidly, that they had twenty-five churches, amongst which that of the Dominicans was renowned for its beauty.*

As the indefatigable zeal of the Franciscan John de Monte Corvino had prepared the erection of the metropolitan see of Khanbalik in China, so that the Dominican Franco de Perouse effected that of the archiepiscopal see of Soultaniyé, in Persia. Franco had sent Guillaume Adam, a French Dominican, into Europe, to inform the sovereign pontiff of the state of that mission, and to ask for auxiliaries. He doubted not that if the number of the evangelical labourers were increased, new nations would obey the impulse already given to the inhabitants of Soultaniyé; and the Pope John XXII. was of the same opinion.

In order to consolidate religion in Persia, he addressed on the 1st of May, 1318, a letter to Franco de Perouse, in which, erecting the city of Soultaniyé into a metropolitan see, he established this zealous missionary as its archbishop. But the Pope did not limit himself to entrusting to Franco the

* Fontana, "Monumenta Dominicana, Ann. 1347." This church served as an arsenal in 1696, according to a missionary Jesuit who passed through Soultaniyé at the time.

administration of that church; he gave besides into his charge, the instruction, the government, and the salvation of all the faithful in most of the lands occupied by the Mongols in the west of Asia. To assist the prelate whose jurisdiction extended over so immense a territory, he gave him as suffragans, six bishops, also Dominicans: Gerard de Calvi, Guillaume Adam, Barthelemy de Podio, Bernardin de Plaisance, Bernard Moreti, and Barthelmy Abaliati. A special bull also authorized the archbishop elect to choose amongst the apostolic missionaries, and to consecrate other bishops should he think it necessary for the propagation of the faith. The Pope also commanded that in case deceased prelates could not be immediately replaced, the communities of preaching brothers should take on themselves the care and regulation of the churches left without pastors. This seems to imply, says Father Foucon,* that the order of St. Dominic had already several houses in Persia. After the great number of conversions spoken of, it was very difficult for the Archbishop of Soultaniyé to build monasteries and to fill them, since, when he was still only a simple priest and a stranger amongst barbarians, he had inspired so high an idea of his virtue, learning and talents, that he had acquired the most powerful influence over all minds and hearts.

John XXII. was so persuaded that the presence of Franco de Perouse was necessary in a country where he was regarded as an apostle, that without heeding ancient custom, according to which new metropolitans ought to go in person to the holy see, there to receive consecration, he ordered that the Archbishop of Soultaniyé should receive on the spot (as John de Monte Corvino had formerly done) the imposition of hands and the investiture of the pallium. William Adam, who had been himself consecrated at Avignon, had the charge of per

* "Hist. des hommes illustres de l'Ordre de St. Dominique," t. I. p 781.

forming the ceremony, and of presenting the apostolical letters to his metropolitan.*

Franco de Perouse soon resigned his see, whether that he might devote himself in greater tranquillity to prayer and the contemplation of celestial things, or with the design of carrying still further the light of the Gospel, and of labouring more freely in the propagation of the faith in the different countries of Asia. The brief of John XXII., dated Avignon, June 1st, 1323, accepting the voluntary resignation of the servant of God, favours the latter conclusion. The Pope

* This is the translation of the pontifical bull, erecting this new archiepiscopal see amongst the Tartars:—

"John XXII. to his dear son, Franco de Perouse, of the Brothers Preachers, archbishop elect of Soultaniyé.

"Our heart has recently felt an immense joy in learning that in Persia and the neighbouring countries, subject to the great Emperor of the Tartars, the magnificent nursery garden of the faithful, planted by the mercy of the Creator, and regenerated by the waters of baptism, fervently adores the name of the Most High, and celebrates the praises of the Redeemer. In order to gratify their pious desires, we have occupied ourselves with zeal and solicitude in the choice of men full of honour and virtue, that they might be sent to labour in the cultivation of this new vine, whose branches, by the grace of God, shall grow and extend throughout those countries to the extremities of the earth. Consequently, we have erected Soultaniyé, the most famous, noble, and populous city in these regions, into a metropolitan city, according to the advice of our brothers, and the plenitude of our apostolic power. We have cast our eyes on you, who are the preacher of the word of God in those countries; and convinced of the sanctity of your life, of your acquaintance with letters, and the abundance of your virtues, we constitute you archbishop and pastor of that city.

"We entrust to you the absolute care, administration, and solicitude for all the souls existing in those countries subject to the Emperor, as well as to the kings and princes of Ethiopia and India. We grant you full and free power to exercise all the authority appertaining to the archiepiscopal character, as it is defined and decreed in the sacred canons, and according to the tenor of our pontifical letters. Wishing, then, that the truth of the Catholic faith should (by the help of God) continually make new progress, and shine through the whole extent of those regions, after having driven away the darkness, we have chosen six brethren of the order of Brothers Preachers, learned in the law of the Lord, distinguished by their life and religion, and commendable for their many virtues; they are Gerard de Calvi, Guillaume Adam, Barthélemi de Podio, Bernardin de Plaisance, Bernard Moreti, and Barthélemi Aballati. We chose them according to the advice of our brothers, and the plenitude of our power, and we constitute them bishops and pastors, and depute them to be your coadjutors in solicitude for those souls whose salvation has been entrusted to you.

"Given at Avignon, 1st of May, 1318."[a]

[a] Raynald, t. xv p 168.

permits Franco still to wear the insignia of the dignity he resigns, and to give the episcopal benediction to the Greeks, and to the people "amongst whom," says the pontiff, "you labour for the salvation of souls, and the progress of the Catholic faith." Guillaume Adam, the suffragan of Franco de Perouse, immediately succeeded him as metropolitan of Soultaniyé.

In the number of missionaries who seconded the zeal of Franco, must not be forgotten Jourdain de Severac.* Jourdain was a Frenchman like Guillaume Adam, and a Frenchman zealous for his country; for, in his "*Description des merveilles d'une partie d'Asie*," he expresses himself thus: I believe that the King of France might, without any assistance, subdue and convert the whole world.† After having evangelised the inhabitants of Soultaniyé, Jourdain was preparing to depart for China, when he received a brief from John XXII. appointing him bishop of Colomban, in India. He repaired to his post, but it is not known whether he remained there long, or even whether he had any successor.‡

III.

The pontificate of John XXII. was celebrated for the great movement which was effected in the missions of Upper Asia. The order of St. Francis and St. Dominic sent into those distant regions a considerable number of missionaries, who went with the cross in their hands to announce a religion of peace, concord, and fraternity, to those barbarous populations, which seemed to be happy only in the midst of the horrors of war. These intrepid and zealous priests returned, sometimes after a long absence, to their brethren in Europe; they related their

* Probably Severac in Rouergue; for Jourdain loves to compare to Toulouse, the cities of which he speaks in his narration.

† Coquebert Montbret, *Recueil de Voyages et de Mémoires*, published by the Geographical Society, t. iv. p. 1.

‡ "Quid postea egerit Jordanis iste nos latet ut et similiter an habuerit successores."—P. Lequren, *Oriens Christianus*.

travels and their apostolic labours, the manners of foreign nations, the wonders of the propagation of the gospel; and their words kindled all hearts, and everywhere raised up new apostles. Avignon was the rendezvous of these "*Travellers for Jesus Christ*," as they were then called; they came to the feet of the common father of the faithful to offer up their conquests to him, and to derive, from his discourse, encouragement to plunge again into a career so full of labour and danger. There was, at that much decried period of the middle age, an incomparable amount of movement, activity, and energy. Nations were continually brought into communication with one another; and long journeys were then, perhaps, more frequent than in our own day. The means of communication were, it is true, imperfect; but there was then an element still more powerful than steam in overcoming obstacles, and shortening distances; this element was religious faith, a faith lively and ardent, which rendered everything possible to those who were animated by it. The papacy was the great motive power whose influence set in action all other forces for the advantage of Christianity and civilisation. From his palace at Avignon, John XXII. kept alive the sacred flame by an active correspondence, which caused the accents of his charity and zeal for the salvation of souls to resound to the four corners of the earth. He wrote to Georgia, to Persia, to China, to Tartary, even to the wildest regions of Turkestan and the mountains of Albors, and seemed to communicate to all Christendom something of the ardour and spirit of proselyteism, with which as a Pope and a Frenchman, his soul was animated.* His apostolic letters were sent in all directions to exhort infidels and pagans to come forth from their darkness, and open their eyes to the light of the gospel, and to encourage the neophytes and fortify them in the faith, while

* John XXII. was a native of Cahors; his family name was Jacques d'Euse; he governed the church from August 7, 1816, until his death, which happened December 4, 1334. His tomb is still seen in the cathedral of Avignon.

using the most affecting and persuasive expressions to the Jacobites and Nestorians to induce these wandering children to return to their mother, the Catholic church, who thus affectionately stretched out her arms towards them.

The indefatigable solicitude of John XX. multiplied apostles of the faith in every region then attainable of infidel countries; and it gave fresh life to the congregation of the travellers for Jesus Christ, formed from the two families of St. Francis and St. Dominic. In 1324 he enjoined the master general of the Brothers Preachers to place the missionaries of his order belonging to that society under the direction of a vicar-general, who should send them into the countries whose spiritual wants made their presence the most necessary. All the Dominicans being authorized to join this congregation, they resorted to it in such numbers, that the provinces of the order were almost depopulated, and the convents nearly deserted. The master-general sent information of this to John XXII., who, admiring the ardent charity of these monks, cried, "They have truly been placed as shining torches in the Church of God."* However, he thought it necessary to moderate this zeal, which might be prejudicial to the order, and perhaps unfavourable to the missions also. He wrote to the Dominicans assembled in chapter at Venice, not to allow so many persons to devote themselves to the preaching of the gospel; to admit to the apostolic ministry those only who should have special letters from their superiors; to choose from amongst them the most learned and best qualified; and to send the others back to their convents; this wise injunction was obeyed. At a later period, subsequent to a general assembly of the Dominicans held at Dijon, it was decreed, that, to facilitate the work of the missions, the vicar-general of the society of "Travellers for Christ" should introduce the study of the Oriental languages into the principal houses over which he presided. Two

* Fontana, "Monumenta Dominicana, Ann. 1825."

convents were specially appropriated to this study, one at Pera, the other at Caffa, the capital of the Crimea, which was a long time under the dominion of the Tartars.* John XXII. had erected Caffa into an episcopal see, and sent thither Bishop Jerome, who, having been a suffragan of the archbishopric of Khanbalik, was perfectly acquainted with the language and manner of the Tartars.

Towards this period, the mission of Khanbalik was plunged into deep sorrow; for the illustrious apostle of the Tartars and Chinese, John de Monte Corvino, whose struggles and triumphs we have already related, had just died, to the great sorrow of this flourishing community of Christians. He had converted more than thirty thousand infidels, during his long and laborious mission. William Adam, the successor of Franco de Perouse in the archbishopric of Soultaniyé, was then at Khanbalik; he received the last sigh of John de Monte Corvino, and presided at his funeral. All the inhabitants of Khanbalik, without distinction, mourned for the man of God, and both Christians and pagans were present at the funeral ceremony, the latter rending their garments in token of grief, according to their custom on such occasions. The linen and various articles which had belonged to the archbishop were reverently collected; for every one wished to possess and piously to preserve some of these relics; and the place of his burial became a pilgrimage to which the inhabitants of Khanbalik resorted with pious eagerness.† These details have been preserved by William Adam himself, who, after his journey into China, edited, by order of John XXII., a curious narra-

* Fontana, "Monumenta Dominicana, Ann. 1331."

† "Cilz arceveusques Jehan del Mont Curuin est, comme il plut a Dieu, nouvellement trespassez de ce siecle. A son obseque, et a son sepulture vinrent tres grant multitude de gens crestiens et de paiens, et desarolent ces paiens leurs robes de deuil, ainsi qui leui guise est. Et ces gens chrestiens et paiens pristrent en grant devocion les draps de l'arceveusques et le tinrent a grant reverence et pour relique. La fu il ensevelis moult honnourablement a la guise des fiables (fidèles) crestiens, encore visite ou le lieu de sa sepulture a moult grant devocion."—*Le livre de l'estat du Grant Cuan.*

tive, entitled, "Of the State and Government of the Great Khan of Cathay, Sovereign Emperor of the Tartars, &c."

As soon as the sovereign pontiff had heard that the Church of Khanbalik was widowed of her virtuous and zealous pastor, he hastened to provide a successor to John de Monte Corvino; and chose Nicholas, of the order of St. Francis, and sent with him, for the evangelisation of the Tartars, twenty-six monks and six lay brothers of the same order. This holy expedition, composed of an archbishop and thirty-two missionaries, was well adapted to give a new and strong impulse to the affairs of religion in Upper Asia. Nicholas, second archbishop of Pekin, was a Frenchman, and, what was rather remarkable, had been Professor of Theology in the faculty of Paris; he is even mentioned in the letter which John XXII. addressed by him to the great Khan of the Tartars. "We send you," says he, "our venerable brother, Nicholas, Archbishop of Khanbalik, *Professor* of the order of the brothers minorites."* Nicholas had the charge, at the same time, of an encyclical letter addressed to the Tartar nation, "*Universo Populo Tartarorum*," and of a letter for Usbeck Khan, sovereign of Kiptchak.

IV.

We have already said that Christianity had numerous and fervent neophytes in Kiptchak, and above all in Serai, the capital of the countries subject to the Tartars. The prosperity of this mission had been, for a moment, disturbed by the commencement of a persecution excited by the Mussulmans, who had persuaded Usbeck to forbid the bells to be rung under the pretence that it was an evil omen, and foretold something fatal to the empire. We have recorded the letter which John XXII. wrote on the 28th of March, 1318, to this

* "Venerabilem patrem nostrum Nicolaum, archiepiscopum Cambaliensem, ordinis Fratrum minorum professorem, &c."—*Raynald*, t. xv. p. 426; *Wadding*, t. vii. p. 128.

Tartar prince, thanking him for the favour shown until that time to the missionaries, exhorting him to embrace Christianity himself, and begging him to revoke the edict issued three years before, and to allow the faithful liberty to ring their bells. Sixteen years after this letter of the Pope, the Christians and missionaries of Kiptchak were thrown into consternation by the disgraceful fall of a Franciscan, who, however, soon consoled them by his admirable penitence.*

Stephen, a Hungarian by birth, had when very young taken the habit of the Minorite brothers; his ardent and passionate nature made him believe that he had a vocation for the apostleship, and that he should find in that career of self-devotion and sacrifice a channel for his superabundant energy. He was accordingly educated for the priesthood, and sent into Kiptchak, where the children of St. Francis were labouring successfully for the conversion of the infidels.

Stephen was only twenty-five years old when he arrived at the convent of St. John, situated three miles from the great and opulent city of Serai. He had occasion to visit this capital of Kiptchak, and his eyes, accustomed until then to the stern and severe features of monastic life, were insensibly dazzled and fascinated by the luxury, pomp, and voluptuousness of this Oriental world, which the doctrines of Islamism were continually alluring to pleasure. When the monk was shut up in his poor cell, his ardent imagination often caused him to hear harmonious sounds like the echo of the brilliant fetes of Serai. His first ardour in the service of God soon began to cool; he ceased to pray, his soul gave itself up to the soothing delusions of the world, and he had the misfortune to fall into that state of religious indifference which rapidly leads to forgetfulness of duty and virtue. Faith itself, that pillar which is the last support of man, after having tottered for some time, fell at length, and Stephen renounced in his

* Wadding, ann. 1334, No. 4. La Chronique des Frères mineurs, t. ii. p. 248. Féret, Abrégé de la vie des Saints des Trois ordres de St. François, t. ii. p. 328.

heart the whole Christian creed. Having thus broken the ties which bound him to his God, he easily allowed himself to be carried away by the impetuosity of his nature; and an irregularity of conduct of which he was suspected, obliged his superiors to shut him up (as a measure of discipline) in the interior of the convent.

The prisoner of the monastery of St. John did not, however, return to better feelings; the correction he was enduring seemed only to irritate his desires, and heighten the attractions of a worldly life; and his mind began to dwell with complacency on the thoughts of escape, though the poor missionary still hesitated, and feared to pass the barrier which separated him from the abyss. His mind became the prey of a terrible internal struggle, and sometimes the remembrance of the pure delight which he had tasted in the service of God induced him to repel the cup of pleasure with which he had tried to intoxicate himself; and then again his eager longings would attract him towards the world, but he would seem suddenly arrested by divine grace, and prevented from rushing entirely into the road to perdition. That he might have more power to resist the thought of escape which tormented him, he begged the assistance of the prayers of the monks; but the tempter then attacked him with redoubled violence, and Stephen felt himself conquered. He clandestinely quitted his cell, fully resolved at last to renounce the religious life, the Christian faith, and God. He was just about to leave the cloister, when Providence permitted his eyes to fall upon the cross which surmounted the steeple of the church. This sight immediately paralysed the impious courage by which he was animated, and he cried out, "Can I so far betray my Saviour, who for love of me yielded himself to the most cruel sufferings?" The next day he again recommended himself to the prayers of his brethren, and conjured them to watch over him, and to prevent him from ruining himself forever. The superiors, affected by this mark of good feeling, and persuaded that

flight alone could save the poor monk, resolved to send him into the convent of Caffa in the Crimea, hoping that the incidents of the journey and being surrounded by new brethren would drive away the illusions by which he was so cruelly pursued; but it was too late.

Stephen had deserted his monastery, and was hastening towards Serai, in the pursuit of those felicities of which his maddened imagination had so passionately dreamed. Scarcely had he entered the city when he began to declaim against Christianity, and declared to the Mussulmans that he came to embrace the law of Mahomet. The Kadi was delighted at this news; he received Stephen with every mark of respect and sympathy; for he felt how important to Islamism would be the conversion of a Christian priest, the member of a religious order whose progress among the infidels of Tartary had been so striking, and whose learning equalled its virtues.

The morrow was the day on which the Mussulmans celebrate pompously one of their religious festivals; and they eagerly took advantage of this great solemnity to display, in the sight of the whole city, the triumph of Mahomet. Stephen repaired to the mosque; and there abjured Christianity, and made a public profession of the religion of the Koran. This Mussulman festival corresponded precisely in that year 1334 with Good Friday, and whilst the Christians in their churches were listening to the mournful story of the Saviour's passion, one of their missionaries was denying Jesus Christ amidst the applause of the infidels. The Kadi himself took from the person of the apostate Franciscan his religious dress, which he trampled under his feet with contempt and derision; they then clothed him in a scarlet robe, encircled his head with a beautiful turban enriched with jewels, and put a mantle of state, magnificently embroidered with gold, on his shoulders. The report was immediately spread in every quarter of Serai that the high priest of the Christians had just been converted to Mahomet; there was soon an immense crowd in the envi-

rons of the mosque, and the chiefs of the Mahometan religion did not fail to take advantage of the general emotion, to organise a solemn procession, and celebrate by public rejoicings this happy event.

The apostate missionary was pompously paraded through the city, amidst the acclamations of the votaries of Mahomet. He advanced, surrounded by the principal inhabitants, mounted on a horse richly caparisoned, and preceded by numerous banners adorned with the crescent, above which was seen the religious habit of the Franciscan, carried at the end of a long pike in sign of triumph. The procession thus traversed the city in great pomp, with sound of the trumpet, to the joy of the Mahometans, but to the utter confusion of the Catholics, and above all of the priests, who, with tears in their eyes and hearts broken with grief, fled, hiding their faces, from that crowd intoxicated with the glory supposed to accrue from this disgrace of the Christian name. Nevertheless, that divine glance, whose tender mercy had once caused a faithless apostle to weep bitterly after his triple denial of his Lord, had penetrated also the soul of the apostate missionary. Even during this triumphal march, in the midst of the frantic acclamations of the multitude, Stephen heard the sobs of the Christians and the priests. The joy of the Mussulmans and the grief of the Catholics alike caused him to blush at this impious ovation, and he had now the happiness of feeling the first stings of shame and remorse. After the procession, a splen id banquet was served up to him; but what had just taken place had so overpowered him, and he was a prey to such anguish that he touched none of the viands; but fearing to betray the remorse by which he was tormented, he replied to their questions that the spirit of Mahomet was in him. He was then conducted to a magnificent dwelling, accompanied by the Imaum who had the charge of his instruction. On that and the following days, he received, and moistened with his tears, letters full of grace written by the monks, those sincere

and devoted friends who still held out their hands to rescue him from the abyss, and with unbounded charity still offered him the kiss of reconciliation. He replied to one of them :— "I have sinned like Judas, but I do not, like him, yield to despair. God has given me grace to perceive the enormity of my crime, and to repent of it; if you can conceal me without compromising yourselves or the Christians, I am ready to submit to perpetual imprisonment; if you cannot, I desire that you should come and prepare me, by the administration of the sacraments, for the trial of martyrdom; as I have publicly denied Jesus Christ, I wish now to acknowledge him publicly as my God and Saviour."

An interview was secretly planned, which took place on the morrow, Easter-day, in the house of a Christian. Pierre de Bologne, superior of the monastery, hastened thither with the other monks, and at the sight of his brethren Stephen prostrated himself with his face to the earth, and weeping, in a voice broken by sobs, asked pardon for his crime. He begged to be admitted to penance, and the communion of the faithful, with such heartfelt and lively expressions of repentance, as drew tears from all present, and was so admitted accordingly, and received absolution for the crime of apostasy and all his sins. All this took place within closed walls, and without arousing the suspicions of the Mussulmans.

On the following day an extraordinary solemnity was to take place at the mosque, in honour of the new believer, who had promised to make an oration to the multitude of the followers of Mahomet. Ten thousand Mussulmans were already assembled in the vast enclosure of the mosque of Serai, when Stephen appeared. He was clad in a scarlet robe, and proceeded with noble confidence towards the tribune, amidst th acclamations of the assembly Having, with his hand, demanded silence, he cried in a voice of emotion, yet full of determination: "I have been a Christian for twenty-five years, and have examined the doctrines of Christianity; know

then, all you who listen to me, that the religion of Jesus Christ is the only true religion, and that by which alone we can be saved. During three days that I have lived amongst you as an apostate, I have seen in yours only superstition and falsehood. I confess, then, that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God and Saviour of the world. I pronounce anathema on the impostor Mahomet! anathema on the false prophet!" At these words he tore and cast away the beautiful scarlet robe, and appeared before the astonished spectators, in the humble habit of a Minorite brother. "I am a Christian," said he, "and ready to die for Jesus Christ." This bold and unexpected proceeding threw the Mussulmans into a fury; they flung themselves upon him, tore him from the tribune, and would have massacred him on the spot, if the Kadi had not interposed his authority, and made them understand the necessity of sparing him to undergo the punishment awarded to him by law,—namely, that of being burned to death.

The Franciscan was then conducted, with his hands tied, before the judge; and when, after they had tormented him the whole day, they found he remained constant in the Christian faith, he was given over to the executioner. He was then scourged with leathern bags filled with lead and sand, until he fell down half dead; and he was afterwards suspended by one foot and one hand, with heavy weights attached to the opposite limbs, and left the whole night in this torturing attitude. He was found still alive in the morning, however: perhaps God granted him a more than moderate share of strength to bear these torments in order that he might by his sufferings expiate his atrocious apostacy, and repair the mischief of the immense scandal he had occasioned.

For six whole days was Stephen tortured, without its seeming possible for his enemies to put an end to his life; until at length the Mahometans, enraged to see the intrepid Franciscan still surviving all the inventions of their barbarity, rushed on him with hatchets and other weapons, cut him

down and tore him to pieces. Such was the triumph gained by this missionary by his unfortunate fall! The Evil Spirit had been able for some time to transform the disciple of St. Francis into a slave of Mahomet; but the greater power of God had enabled the renegade to see his error, and become again a confessor of Jesus Christ, a penitent and a glorious martyr.

In 1335, a year after this memorable event, which had caused the most lively emotion among the Christians of the capital of Kiptchak, came news of the death of Abou-Saïd, the sove reign of the empire founded by the Mongols in Persia. He was the last of the Tartar khans who exercised imperial power in the western countries of Asia, and he left only one son, whom the chiefs of the horde refused to acknowledge; but went to war among themselves, and endeavoured to destroy each other.

The states founded by the descendants of Tchinguiz-Khan were for a long time a prey to the ravages of intestine warfare, and a throng of petty sovereigns were disputing by turns the ruins of this vast empire, when the famous Tamerlane, with his victorious armies, put an end to the strife by seizing on all the countries in dispute. Whilst the Tartar princes of Persia were thus struggling to effect their reciprocal ruin, the emperor of the Oriental Mongols, who reigned in Cathay, sent an embassy to the sovereign pontiff. At this epoch the preaching of the gospel had made immense progress, both within the limits of China, and beyond the great wall; and the numerous Christians spread over those vast countries were continually receiving marks of favour from the emperor and the grand dignitaries of the empire. The missionaries had even succeeded in collecting a flourishing Christian community at Ily-Ballik, an important town situated in the centre of Tartary, where they built a large and beautiful church, so that the religion of Jesus Christ was spreading, from day to day, in the remote deserts of Mongo-

lia. The grand khan of the Tartars and Chinese, desirous of strengthening the alliance which he had formed with the Christians, sent, in 1338, a deputation to the sovereign pontiff. It was composed of six persons, the chief of whom was named André, and belonged to the order of the Franciscans. He was the bearer of two letters, one from the emperor himself, and the other from several princes resident at the court of Pekin.

The emperor wrote as follows:—

"In the power of God Omnipotent.

"Manifesto of the Emperor of Emperors!

"We send our ambassador André, a Frank by birth, with fifteen companions, to the Pope, the Lord of the Christians of France,* beyond the seven seas, where the sun sets, in order to open a way for communications and messages from the pope to us, and from us to the pope.

"We pray the Pope to make mention of us in his holy prayers, and to interest himself in the Alains, his Christian children and our servants. We beg him also to send us some horses and other *wonderful things* (*equos et alia mira bilia*) from the place where the sun sets. Written at Khanbalik in the year of the Rat† (1336), on the third day of the sixth moon."

The letter of the Alain Christians was as follows:

"In the power of Almighty God, and in honour of our Lord the Emperor.

"We Fodein Jovens, Chatik, &c., bowing our heads to the ground, and kissing the feet of our Holy Father, salute him,

* The pope was then at Avignon.

† It is well known that the Tartars and Chinese count the years by means of a denary ar l duodenary cycle, to which they give the names of animals. Bergeron, who was .gnorant of this practice, imagined that a rat had happened to be the first object that the emperor saw on the new year's day, and that the year was thence so called.

and beg for his grace and benediction, and that he will make mention of us in his holy prayers,—and always remember us.

"We inform your Holiness, that for this long time we have been enlightened by the Catholic faith, governed with wisdom, and abundantly comforted by your legate the brother John (of Monte Corvino), a man holy, mighty, and well instructed, who died more than eight years ago. Since then we have been without a pastor, and without spiritual consolation. We have heard that you have sent us another legate, but he has not yet arrived, and we therefore supplicate your Holiness to give us a wise, good, and well instructed pastor, who may take the charge of our souls. Let him come as soon as may be, for we are a flock without a head and without a guide.

"We entreat your Holiness to reply graciously to our Lord the Emperor, and to open, as he demands, a sure and convenient way of communication for frequent messages between you and him, in order to draw closer the bonds of amity between you. Should you do so, it will be of great service for the saving of souls and the exaltation of the Christian faith. It may be productive of immense benefit to these countries.

"At various epochs three or four messengers have come hither from you to the emperor our Lord, and they have been received graciously, and have had honours and presents showered upon them; but since then the emperor has never had any answer from you or the Apostolic See. For this reason your Holiness should send a sure and faithful messenger. The honour of your Holiness is at stake, for it is a great disgrace to the Christians of these countries, when they are found guilty of lies. Written at Khanbalik, in the year of the Rat (1336), the third day of the sixth moon."*

The sovereign pontiff received this Tartar embassy very

* Wadding, v. 7. p. 209.

graciously; the envoys were magnificently entertained at Avignon; and in a short time they set out on their return to Pekin. Pope Benedict XII. entrusted them with an answer to the emperor, dated June 13, 1338, in which he declares with what great satisfaction he has learned, both from the tenor of the emperor's letter and the verbal communications of his envoys, his great devotion to the holy Roman Church, and to himself who so unworthily holds the place of God upon earth. He begs the emperor to continue his friendly conduct towards the five Alain princes, whom he names, as well as to the other Christians; to allow Catholic priests and monks, and Christians in general, to build and possess churches, basilicas, and oratories, for the celebration of divine service, and to preach freely in his empire the word of God. Finally, he declares his intention of sending his nuncios to China, and begs that they may be well received, and listened to with patience and kindness, in order that the seeds of life that they sow may produce abundant fruit.

The Pope wrote, at the same time, to Fodein Jovens, the principal of the five Alains, to recommend him and the other princes his compatriots to exert themselves to obtain for the Christians permission to build churches and for their spiritual directors to preach freely the word of God. A third letter, addressed to the five Alain princes collectively, instructs them in the principal dogmas of the Christian faith.

Benedict XII. did not forget the promise he had made to the neophytes of China and the emperor, to send missionaries; and in the month of November of the same year, he sent off, as apostolic nuncios to High Asia, the four Franciscans, Nicholas Bonnet, professor of theology, Nicholas de Molano, John of Florence, and Gregory of Hungary. They performed this long journey by short stages, stopping a little in each country they traversed, visiting the most renowned princes of the East, and never neglecting any opportunity of scattering on their route the seeds of Christian truth.

They reached China at last in the year 1342, received a most favourable reception from the Emperor, and wondered at the progress the Catholic faith was making in those countries. The Christian communities were numerous and flourishing, and the Franciscans, whose learning, prudence, and sanctity had made a great impression on the people, were rapidly increasing their establishments. Those who inhabited the monastery of Monte Corvino, near the imperial palace, were treated with so much attention, that the emperor frequently admitted them to his table, allowed them to present themselves to him with the great people of his court, and would often ask their blessing at night before going to rest.*

The respect and influence enjoyed by the missionaries in China were increased by the arrival of John of Florence and his companions, invested for ten years with the dignity of apostolic nuncios. The emperor had facilitated the exercise of their ministry by a new edict, authorising the preaching of the Christian faith throughout the empire, and commanding the other princes of the East to give the most honourable reception to the preachers. John of Florence, the chief of the legation, traversed the provinces with indefatigable zeal, proclaiming everywhere the name of Christ. At his voice new churches arose for the converts, and the Catholic faith, victorious and triumphant, spread into all parts of the empire. After a residence of twelve years, he returned to Avignon in 1353, bringing letters from the emperor now not extant, but the learned author of the Annals of the Brothers Minor† assures us that the grand Khan pronounced therein a great eulogium on the Christian religion, placed all his subjects under obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff, and asked for more missionaries to finish the work of converting and civilising his vast states.

Benedict XII. was, in accordance with this request, prepar-

* Wadding, v. 7. p. 729. † Ibid. v. 87.

ing a new Franciscan mission, when the revolution broke out in China, which frustrated the whole project.

The mission of Ili-Balik, of which we have already spoken, had borne in the wilds of Tartary fruits of salvation not less abundant than those of China. This important Christian community had flourished on the confines of Mongolia in the province of Ili, a dependency of Turkestan. Before reaching these distant countries, there are frightful deserts to be traversed, and the Moussour mountains and their glaciers to be crossed. These gigantic mountains are, in fact, formed of masses of ice, heaped one upon another, so that travellers can only cross them by cutting steps as they go; but on the other side of these Moussour Mountains the country is magnificent, the climate temperate, and the soil adapted to every kind of cultivation. It was among the populations of these great valleys that the Franciscans had succeeded in propagating Christianity. The chief of the mission was Friar Richard of Burgundy, bishop of Ili Balik, who, on going to assume his office, chose some learned and zealous collaborators from his own order. We may mention Pascal of Vittoria (in Spain), Francis of Alexandria, and Raymond Ruffa of the same town; these three were priests: but there were also two lay-brothers, Peter Martel of Narbonne, and Lawrence of Alexandria, as well as a black, called John of India, who had for a long time served as interpreter to the Archbishop of Pekin. These zealous apostles did not content themselves with residing and preaching in the towns; they were continually traversing the vast extent of Tartary, dwelling, like the nomadic populations of those regions, in huts upon wheels, which carried them across immense tracts of country to wherever the spiritual wants of neophytes and the probability of conversions seemed to require their presence. Having no fixed habitation, they followed these pastoral tribes, and adopted their vagabond way of life; stopping with them at their various encampments, living like them upon milk, and glad to pass their days

in the Tartars' tents, if they were only permitted to preach the Gospel to their occupants.

What energy and perseverance did not these poor monks display! And yet how few accounts have they left of their incomparable journeys and immense labours! We can only collect with care the details concerning them found scattered here and there through the letters which they occasionally addressed to the convents they had quitted. The historian Wadding has preserved for us one letter of Pascal, the Spanish missionary to Ili-Balik, addressed to the superior and monks of his convent at Vittoria; and we gladly give it here, as it may help to make the reader acquainted with these admirable apostles of the middle ages, who could both do great things, and relate them with simplicity and candour—

"We hereby inform you, holy Father, and you, very dear brothers, that after having left you with brother Gonsalvi of Transtorna, we went to Avignon, where we received the blessing of your venerable superior-general. We embarked at Venice, and after having traversed the Adriatic, and leaving Sclavonia on the left and Turkey on the right,* we landed near Constantinople, where we found the Father Vicar of China, and of the Oriental province. We then took ship, and, crossing the Black Sea, whose depth is an unfathomable abyss, we reached the empire of the Tartars, and after that, having again navigated a sea without bottom, we anchored at the mouth of the Volga. As I was in more haste than my companion, I mounted a cart drawn by horses, which carried me to Serai, the capital of Kiptchak, while my companion was taken with some other brothers to Urganthe. My intention was at first to join him, but I afterwards preferred staying to learn the language of the country; and by the grace of God, I have learnt the Mongol tongue, and the Oigour characters, which are in general use throughout these countries,—in Tartary, Persia, Chaldea, Medea, and China.

* It will be remembered that the Turks at this time had no European territory.

"My companion afterwards left Urganthe to return to you in Spain; but as for me, I have a horror—even to vomiting—of a return. I would not turn back, for I desire to profit by the favour granted by the sovereign pontiff to all the monks who come to these countries, and who have the same indulgences as those who make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

"Thus, my fathers, since by the grace of God I had learned the language of the country, I often preached, without an interpreter, the word of God to the Saracens, as well as to schismatic and heretic Christians; but in the meanwhile I received from my vicar apostolic an order, in the name of my obedience as a monk, to set off and complete my journey. After having remained more than a year at Serai, the capital of Kiptchak, where one of our brethren, named Stephen of Hungary, was martyred, three years ago, by the Saracens, I embarked with the Armenians on a river they call the Tigris, and then, proceeding along the sea-shore, we arrived after twelve days' march at Saratchik.* We then mounted on a car drawn by camels, whose pace is dreadful; and in fifty days I reached Urganthe, a town on the confines of the empire of the Tartars and Persians. This town bears also the name of Ilus, and it is said that the body of the blessed Job lies there. Again ascending a car drawn by camels, and travelling in company with accursed Saracens, followers of Mahomet, myself the only Christian among them, I arrived at last in the empire of the Medes. God knows what I have suffered; and it would be too long to relate to you all these miseries, and how the caravan of Saracens which I followed, had to stop in all the towns for fear of robbers. I have had much torment from these Saracens, while preaching to them without ceasing, openly proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, and unveiling the frauds and lies of their false

* This town belongs at present to the Russian government of the Caucasus, and contains the remains of some very fine buildings, constructed in the time of the Tartars.

prophet, confounding their errors, and putting to silence in public their frightful bayings. I had but little fear, since I trusted in our Lord, and the support of his Holy Spirit. At the epoch of one of their festivals, they placed me before a mosque, where, on account of the solemnity, there assembled a great concourse of people and of Imaums. Being inspired by the Holy Spirit, I disputed their religion, their false Koran, and their doctrines, for five-and-twenty days together, on this same spot before the mosque, so that I could hardly go home once a day to take some bread and water. The Holy Trinity was thus preached to them; and after long opposition they ended by admitting it; and thanks to the protection of Almighty God, I always gained the victory, to his honour, and that of our holy mother the Church.

"These children of the devil endeavoured to seduce me by their presents, and promising me voluptuous enjoyments, honour, and riches, all that can be desired of worldly things; they desired to pervert me, and when I repulsed their offers with contempt, they stoned me for two days, singed my face and my feet, tore out my beard, and overwhelmed me with outrage and abuse; but as for me, poor monk as I am, I rejoiced in that the adorable goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ had judged me worthy to suffer these things for his name. This is the manner in which I have been treated as far as Ily-Balik, which is a vicariate of China. From Urganthe, a frontier town of the Persians and Tartars, to Ily-Balik, I was, for five months' march, the sole Christian amongst Saracens; but I did not on that account cease to proclaim by my words, my acts, and my costume the name of Jesus Christ. They often administered poison to me, and often plunged me in the water; they fell upon me, and beat me, and inflicted other evils of which I will not speak in this letter. But I thank God for all, and I hope to suffer more still for the glory of his name, and the remission of my sins, and thus to attain to the kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

"I salute you in the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray for me and for those who take, or desire to take, this journey, which is, by God's help, of great benefit for the perfection and salvation of souls. Do not expect to see me again, unless it should be in these countries, or in Paradise, where is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our repose, our consolation, and our inheritance. My well-beloved brothers, it is my mission to announce the word of God to divers nations, and to show to sinners their sins and the way of salvation; but it belongs to God only to grant them the grace of conversion. Written at Ily-Balik, on the day of the festival of St. Lawrence, in the year of the Lord 1838."*

Such were the missionaries who evangelised the north of Tartary, and who had chosen Ily-Balik for the centre of their apostolic operations. A zeal so ardent could not fail to effect numerous conversions, and the khan of these countries also had become the friend of the Christians. It happened that this prince was taken ill just at the time when the mission was established in his capital, and friar Francis of Alexandria, who possessed some skill in surgery, succeeded in curing him of a fistula and other ailments, a cure that won for him the complete confidence of the khan, who called him his father, and admitted him to his counsels, so that he acquired great authority amongst the dignitaries of the empire. The superiority of their talents, but especially the exemplary conduct and perfect disinterestedness of the missionaries, seemed to the Mongol prince a proof of the holiness of their religion, as no other could be capable, he thought, of inspiring such self-devotion. He had not, however, the strength of mind himself to embrace the doctrines he so much admired, but gave his son, a boy of eight years of age, to Francis, to be educated in the principles of Christianity. This young prince received baptism and the name of John, and friar Francis, who often

* Wadding, v. 7. p. 256.

went to the imperial palace, to carry him through a course of religious instruction, profited by this opportunity to introduce the Christian truth into the court.

Catholicism had at length struck deep root into this soil, long so sterile. The germs of faith were developing themselves in abundance, and all presaged a rich harvest, when a political catastrophe suddenly blighted all these beautiful and joyful hopes.

The Tartar sovereign, who had been so great a friend to the missionaries, was poisoned by a prince of his family, a fanatic Mahometan. The usurper, enraged at the zeal shown by the Franciscans in extirpating, not only idolatry, but the Islamism that he himself professed, now enjoined all Christians, under pain of death, to renounce Jesus Christ, and become Mussulmans. The Christians, however, with the missionaries at their head, had the honour and courage formally to refuse obedience to the tyrant, and took no notice of his menaces. They publicly professed their faith, and continued to celebrate as before the ceremonies of their religion; and the usurper being informed of this noble and holy rebellion, gave orders that the means of seduction should first be tried, with respect to both the missionaries and their converts, but that, should these fail, the Christians should be pitilessly exterminated. Those who determined to remain inflexible in the faith had to endure all the tortures that the most savage tyranny could invent. A public and formal proposal of abjuration was made to the missionaries; and on their refusal they were all seven chained together, and given up to the fury of the Mussulman mob, which, urged on by the authorities, stopped at no atrocity. They began by abuse, then they struck the missionaries on the head and with whips and sticks,—then they stabbed at them, and finally cut off their noses and ears; and when they found that neither opprobrium nor torment could shake the constancy of these valiant apostles, whose voices rose high amidst their tortures to glorify Jesus Christ, to preach the Gospel, and to

utter anathemas on Mahomet and the Koran,—they struck their heads off. This was in the month of June 1342; and the populace afterwards attacked the convent of the Franciscans, pillaged and burnt it. The other Christians, as they did not take flight, were thrown into prison, loaded with chains, and cruelly treated, and the persecution did not cease till the tyrant was put to death by a Tartar chief; when the storm abated, and the few Christian believers who were left were suffered to remain unmolested.

The time was approaching, however, when Christianity in High Asia, after having shone, more or less brightly, in the seventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, was about to become entirely extinct. The vast countries overrun by the Tartars, were resounding with the tumult of war, and involved in a frightful confusion, in which the voices of those who preached the good tidings could no longer be heard. Catholicism, which had in some measure entered China with the Mongols, and made so much progress there in the reign of Kublai Khan and his successors, was about to disappear with the Mongol dynasty of Yuen. The son of a common labourer, who had become a Bonze in the Buddhist convent of Sou-Tcheou, had thrown away his monkish robe, and, assuming the uniform of a soldier, put himself at the head of the Chinese insurgents, who had revolted against the Tartar government, and after gaining numerous victories over them, drove the foreigners from the empire, founded (in 1369) the dynasty of Ming, and gave to the year of his reign the name of *Houng-Wou*, that is to say, "Fortunate War,"—or, more literally, "Immense Fortune produced by War."

The Christians shared in this revolution the fate of their protectors. As the new Chinese dynasty was endeavouring to put a stop to all communication with foreign countries, new missionaries could no longer get to Pekin, and the mission consequently began to languish. The papacy, however, would not be discouraged, and notwithstanding this unfortunate state

of things, Urban V., in 1370, sent off to High Asia several Dominican and Franciscan friars, to replace those whom the persecution had carried away. He appointed William de Prato, a distinguished Professor of the University of Paris, to the archiepiscopal see of Pekin, and gave him twelve Franciscans for companions, and he also organised sixty others into various embassies which he sent to Tartary to the Emperor, and various Mongol princes. In 1371 he invested Francis de Podio, surnamed Catalan, with the dignity of Legate Apostolic, and sent him to the same country with twelve companions, the choice of whom was left to him. But nothing was ever heard more either of the Archbishop of Pekin, or the missionaries, or the ambassadors; and as war was raging over all the countries into which the Pope had desired them to make their way, it is to be presumed that they fell a sacrifice in their efforts to fulfil their mission. The Christian communities founded in the other states of Asia subject to the Tartars had no happier fate than those of China, and the descendants of Tchinguiz-Khan waged implacable wars amongst themselves, weakened each other mutually, and seemed as if they were trying to prepare for Tamerlane a prey easy to devour.

Tamerlane was born in 1336, and at the earliest period when his name was heard in Europe, he was already a warrior dreaded among the princes and khans of his nation, and subduing them one after the other. It was not long before he led his grand army to India, which he conquered after some fierce and sanguinary battles, and he also ravaged Muscovy, and subjected to his sway the great dominions of the Turks. The world resounded with the news of the battle between Tamerlane and Bajazet, in which the latter was vanquished, taken alive, and shut by the Tartar in an iron cage, against the arm of which he beat out his brains.*

* This is the account given by all the Greek and Latin authors, but the Oriental writers contradict it, and declare that, on the contrary, Bajazet was honourably treated by the victor.

The very name of Tamerlane became the terror of nations, and the insatiable invader was just preparing a formidable expedition against China, when death came suddenly, in 1405, to overthrow the Colossus and dissipate in a moment his gigantic empire. His immense heritage fell to his children, but they were far from resembling him. They rushed like birds of prey upon a quarry to snatch whatever provinces they could, and soon the fabulous empire of Tamerlane was dislocated and rent asunder, and on its fragments arose that of the great Moguls who reigned with more or less success down to the epoch of the English domination.

Opinions differ as to what kind of religious principles Tamerlane professed; some assert that, after the example of Tchinguiz-Khan, he was simply a deist, but rather more favourable to the Christians than the followers of Mahomet. Catrou, in his "General History of the Mongol Empire," says (vol. i. p. 7.), "He followed the religion of Tchinguiz-Khan, which had been preserved in the Mongol family. He adored the Almighty, Invisible, and Eternal God, perfectly one, without distinction of nature or person. He observed the natural law comprised in the eight precepts, which are pretty nearly those of the Decalogue, but he despised the dreams of the Koran, and he was the enemy both of idolaters and Mussulmans, while he did not object to the law of Jesus Christ." According to this author, "Tamerlane retained the same sentiments to the last hour of his life, when the only person he allowed to approach him was an Imaum, well instructed in his own principles of religion. This Imaum, it is said, exhorted him, in accordance with these doctrinal principles, and succeeded in softening his heart, so that he expired confessing the unity of God, and full fear of His justice, and confidence in His mercy." After having given this rather strange account, the historian exclaims, "It is our part to bow to the decrees of heaven with respect to a hero who was acquainted with the Christian reli-

gion, who loved it, and protected it, but who did not ever profess it!"

The testimony of various Arab authors, however, and of the celebrated Orientalist Herbelot, would go to prove that Tamerlane was a fanatic Mussulman, who pursued with equal fury, Christians and idolaters; and that after having joined the sect of the Sumites,* he never ceased to persecute that of the Shi-ites, which was most numerous in Persia, and it is even said that he sought to convert the latter, not only by the influence of his authority, but also by his argumentative skill. This ferocious warrior was fond of playing the theologian; he liked religious discussions as well as battles; and after having vanquished his enemies in the field, was well pleased to be acknowledged the victor also in wordy warfare.

It is not very easy, even after having read all the histories of the life of Tamerlane, to make out precisely what his religion was, but it is quite certain that under his reign Christianity was almost entirely destroyed in the extreme East, and that the flourishing missions, founded in Tartary with so much labour and perseverance by the religious orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic, entirely disappeared. From this epoch also may be dated the triumph of Mahometanism among the nations of Asia, and wherever Tamerlane penetrated with his barbarous legions, he pitilessly massacred the Christians who would not renounce their faith. Scarcely had he invaded

* Islamism, almost at its commencement, was divided into these two sects; the greatest difference between them is, that the Sumites regard the succession of the four first Caliphs as legitimate, while the Shi-ites acknowledge no rights but those of Ali. The Sumites have a horror of the murder of Osman, while the Shi-ites cannot pardon that of Ali and his sons. . . In the course of ages, these differences have assumed a more marked character, and been increased by the various political interests of the nations which have followed one or the other. From time immemorial, almost all the wars between the Turks and the Persians, the former of which are Sumites, and the latter Shi-ites, have been religious as well as national wars, and the attempts so continually repeated, and lastly by Shah-Nadir, to mingle and unite the two sects, have always been as fruitless as those made for many ages to bring together the Christian churches of the East and the West.—Von Hammer, *History of the Assassins*, p. 24.

Georgia, before he compelled the Christian prince Isocrates to declare himself a follower of Mahomet, and a great majority of his subjects to do the same. The Christians who resisted were slaughtered, their churches destroyed, and all sacred vessels and furniture given to the flames. In the countries where he desired to appear more tolerant, as in Natolia, for example, he contented himself with reducing the Christians to slavery. Tamerlane passed on like a devastating scourge; cold, cruel, imperturbable, he was accessible to no sentiment of pity or commiseration; and after having laid waste thousands of towns, and destroyed an incalculable number of men, he left a great part of Asia a desert, covered with human bones and blood-stained ruins.

In consequence of the convulsions occasioned by the wars of Tamerlane, and the overthrow of the Mongol dynasty in China, Catholicism was rapidly declining, and there were, especially among the Tartars, very few Christians left. Some Franciscan missionaries who had escaped the massacres, struggled to keep alive a spark of faith, amidst ashes and ruins, and even hoped, by zeal and care, to kindle it once more to a flame. In 1391, they sent Royer of England and Ambrose of Sienna to the sovereign pontiff, to beg him once more to send preachers of the gospel to the Tartars; and they obtained permission to take back with them twenty-four Franciscans, but what was the fate of these new apostles was never known, nor even whether they ever reached the goal of their mission. In 1414, a daughter of a certain Tartar prince was brought to the West, and, it is said, brought up in a Christian manner by Joanna Queen of Naples.* It is even asserted that she afterwards took the veil, and passed the rest of her life in a monastery, but history tells us nothing more that is in any way connected with the affairs of Christianity in High Asia at this period.

* Bergeron, *Traité des Tartares.*

The frequent communications that had, during the middle ages, subsisted between the East and the West, were for a long time interrupted. Languor and apathy seemed to succeed the strange activity that had drawn together and mingled so many nations, and when the taste for travelling revived, it assumed an entirely different character.

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